Written by Elizabeth Barrett Friday, 13 September 2013 13:13 -



As the mercury climbed to 105 degrees Friday afternoon, the Swedes opening cross country meet in Cozad started as usual.

Shortly into the run, several competitors collapsed or became disoriented from what one emergency medical technician described as heat exhaustion, heat stroke or dehydration.

Cozad EMT Brian Woldt, who is also Dawson County's emergency management director, said two runners, including one from Gothenburg, were taken to the hospital by ambulance and one by private vehicle.

"Quite a few were escorted to the dunk tank," Woldt said. "Some got better after that and about 10 (were) treated in the clubhouse."

Although he said he's worked the Cozad meet for several years, this year was the worst because of the high temperature and humidity.

"You don't hold a cross country meet or track or anything when it's 105 degrees outside," Woldt said. "No one in their right mind should have been out there."

Cozad High School activities director Cory Spotanski said he was aware of the conditions and took precautionary measures such as filling two horse tanks with water and having ice and drinking water available.

The Cozad Rescue Squad and an athletic trainer were also on hand.

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"We never expected this to happen and I'm not sure what we could have done differently aside from moving the meet," Spotanski said. "And hindsight gives a lot of wisdom."

In the past, the meet has been on Thursday which—this year—was in the 90s at 4 p.m. (when the varsity girls started followed by varsity boys).

However the day of the meet was changed because Cozad played a home football game Thursday night.

In retrospect, Spotanski said meet organizers could have started the junior high race first since those youngsters run a mile.

However once the junior highers started, during the last race of the meet, some of the competitors still experienced problems with the heat.

Instead of preparing for the	emotional Carskadon, "If you
consequences of sweltering	had treated the football game
heat Friday, former cross	like that, you'd have firemen
country assistant coach Curt	lining up gurneys to prepare
Carskadon said the problem	for lightning strikes."
was having the cross country	Carskadon said as many a
meet in the first place.	15 runners collapsed on the
Carskadon addressed the	course
District 20 school board Tues-	"Cozad prepared well fo
daynight and asked that rules	the consequences but misser
be enacted about not having	the point of the problem-
cross country meets on hot	heat." he said.
days or alternatively hosting	He added that school of
them in the morning. He said	ficials should have had the
Nebraska School Activities	courage not to send athlete.
Association guidelines about	to the meet, noting that other
lightning were followed dur-	schools like Kearney and
ing an Aug. 30 football game.	Holdrege didn't send teams.
"It's no fun seeing kids laid	The NSAA does have
out on the ground," said an	guidelines about heat illness

The athletic director, who competed in cross country in high school, said he talked to the coaches who brought teams to the event.

"No one was in favor of not having the meet and no one expressed concern," he said.

Spotanski said he tries to do things to protect kids and showcase their talents at the same time.

## Meet in heat sends three to Cozad hospital Friday



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"I was hoping they would cancel it."

Swede cross country coach Steve Reeves said he's been concerned about excessive heat at the Cozad meet the past couple of years and visited with coaches from different schools in July about changing it to a morning event.

"What happened Friday is something I've not experienced in 35 years of coaching cross country," Reeves said. "I feel terrible for all of the kids involved."

Despite practicing in the heat, Reeves said a meet is a different story.

"It's a whole different level when the gun goes off," he said. "The intensity and emotions are greater."

Reeves said the well being of student athletes is the most important.

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308-537-363

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