

Swedes take fourth at state speech

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Abbie Mazour wins gold in serious prose

Once judging ballots were tabulated for the Class C Nebraska State Speech Championships Thursday, four Swede finalists waited anxiously in the stands.

The wait wasn't long until senior Abbie Mazour stood at the top of the podium as the serious prose champion.

Teammate and fellow senior Carlin Daharsh finished second in persuasive speaking.

Sophomore Dylan France won a third-place medal in humorous prose and was fifth in entertainment speaking.

Alayna Collins, a junior, received a sixth-place medal in entertainment speaking.

After the medal ceremony, the Swedes learned they had finished fourth as a team compared to a fifth-place finish in 2013.

Omaha Skutt Catholic won the class with 232 points (as they did last year) followed by Grenta with 134.

Omaha Marian was third with 94 points and Gothenburg had 76. Gering, which was district runnerup to Gothenburg the previous week, ended with 66 points.

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If the Swedes hadn't split so many state qualifiers with Gering at district competition, Swede speech coach Dan Jensen said he thinks they may have had the numbers to challenge Gretna at state.

"And that's water under the bridge now," Jensen said, noting that he's proud of the speech team.

"They handle stressful situations with such dignity and poise," he said. "It's one of the things I enjoy the most about coaching speech, how I get to see the best in these kids that I get to work with."

Jensen noted that the Swedes handled state speech like any other contest which is how they train.

"In speech, nothing good can be gained by placing any more importance or emphasis on a state performance versus an early season invitational," he explained. "In fact, doing so can spoil the outcome."

The team remained focused throughout the day, supported each other and processed the emotional aspects of the day quickly "and got back to doing what they love to do."

"That's really all that can be expected of them," Jensen said, noting that the final results of each round are out of their hands. "They've learned to accept that fact a long time ago."

Still, Jensen said they put a lot of pressure on themselves because there are high expectations for success.

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