

Oliver, Max earn state medals for Swede girls

Written by Deb Egenberger

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Gothenburg finishes solid season of effort in Omaha.

OMAHA—There's nothing like thousands of spectators and the state's top competitors to give a girl a little case of nerves.

Gothenburg junior Joslyn Oliver was a repeat qualifier for the Nebraska State Track and Field Championships but that didn't mean the pressure to perform didn't wrap her stomach in butterflies during the Class B high jump Saturday morning in Omaha.

"The atmosphere can get to you," said Swede coach Steve Reeves.

Oliver, who had the third best qualifying height in the class, missed her first two attempts at the opening height of 4 feet, 10 inches.

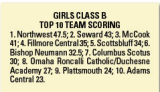
When she sailed over flawlessly on the third try, the nerves calmed and she made the rest look easy.

Oliver cleared 5-5 to place second in the event to Jillanna Scanlan of Plattsmouth, who cleared 5-7 and took home the all-class gold medal.

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Oliver tied with two Class A jumpers for second all-class.

“Joslyn is a real competitor,” Reeves said. “She wasn’t going to let a couple of early misses get to her.”

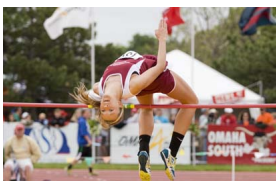
The 5-5 accomplishment improves Oliver’s personal best by an inch. She is No. 2 on the school’s all-time list just an inch behind Hallie Stevens who cleared 5-6 in 1995.

Oliver also competed in the triple jump, going 32-6.75 but finishing outside medal contention.

Swede senior Emily Max had to overcome more than a little case of nerves to earn her medal.

Max stumbled in the 100-meter prelims Friday and missed out on the finals in that event.

“I think Emily had a mental setback when she clipped that hurdle,” Reeves said. “I think she would have had a better mind set going into the 300s had that not gone bad.”



But Max must have pulled it together just fine before the 300-meter hurdle prelims because she ran the race in 46.654 seconds to qualify for finals and solidify her position at No. 3 all-time for the Swedes.

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In Saturday's 300 hurdle finals, strong wind affected Max's time but she still earned a medal in eighth place at 47.631 seconds.

"Emily is one of those kids we're going to have a really hard time replacing," Reeves said of the graduate. "You just don't find many kids with that kind of work ethic."

Along with Max, fellow seniors Ali Abramson and Tabitha Paul made their final trips to the state meet as well.

Abramson ran the 1600-meter race in 5:34.258 to finish 13th.

"Ali ran close to her personal best," Reeves said. "It was an outstanding distance field."

Paul clocked 27.931 in the 200, outside qualifying for finals.

"Tabitha didn't get the most ideal draw in terms of lane one and the tightness of the curve," Reeves said, "but I'm sure proud of her for getting to state again."

Abby Ambler and Ali Clark have one more shot to return to Burke Stadium next spring. The juniors competed in the long jump and pole vault respectively.

"If Abby could have gotten just a couple more inches she may have made finals," Reeves said. "She had an outstanding season for us and we look forward to what she can do next year."

Clark came close to her personal best vault height clearing 9-0.

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Reeves said he looks for one more year of experience to take Clark over the 10-foot mark.

“It was a good year for all of the girls,” Reeves said. “One thing about it, you can never fault the effort.”

The Swedes earned nine team points to finish 29th of 39 Class B schools represented.

Grand Island Northwest took the team title with 47.5 points and Seward was second at 43 points.

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