

Eagles medal in six events at state

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Freshman earns bronze in high jump

OMAHA—Eyes closed and tongue out, Brady freshman Josie Palmer slid topsy-turvy over the high jump bar at 5-feet, 2 inches and scurried off the mat.

She had survived another height in the Class D state competition at Burke Stadium in Omaha Saturday morning.

If nerves hadn't eaten her stomach by then, Eagle coach Rich Britten said he is sure they were working on it.

With three girls remaining, officials moved the bar up two inches.

"I think Josie would have been a little more confident if they would have only gone up an inch," Britten said.

Her personal best was 5-3 at the district meet a week before.

But Palmer didn't back down, She had three solid attempts at 5-4 and nearly cleared it on her third try but the bar fell and she had to settle for third place as the remaining two jumpers cleared the height.

"Of course she hoped for better but she did very, very well," Britten said. "And she'll be back."

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The same is true for sophomore Valerie Most, who didn't place in the high jump but earned medals in both the pole vault and the 4x100 relay.

Most got over 9-0 in the vault to tie for sixth place and ran the second leg of the 4x100 relay that finished sixth as well.

"The girls thought the third handoff wasn't too smooth," Britten said of the relay, which posted the second best qualifying time.

Brady led the relay as the girls headed into the final exchange zone but passing the baton from Autumn Hild to anchor Megan Polt was a little bumpy and Polt had to run from behind.

They finished in 51.517 seconds for sixth. Shaylin McClellen ran in addition to Most, Hild and Polt.

McClellen was the only other Eagle girl to compete individually. Britten said she struggled in the long jump and missed out on the finals but as a freshman, she too is likely to find her way back to Omaha.

For the Brady boys, senior Sawyer Burke earned the only individual medal, placing fifth in the Class D high jump after clearing 6-2.

All three of the boys from third place to eighth went out at 6-2. Britten said Burke hadn't made that height since his first meet of the season in March.

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Burke also ran the 200-meter dash and was the lead leg of the 4x400 relay which closed out the Class D competition Saturday afternoon.

With Eric Roe, Zach Mann and Bryley Roper, the Eagle relay finished seventh in a time of 3:34.629.

“They were hoping for a better place and a record time,” Britten said. “The mile relay is one of the oldest records on our board and I know they hoped to break it but they still earned a medal and I’m proud of them.”

With three of the four runners being underclassmen, Britten expects to bump that record in no time.

Same goes for the 4x800 relay.

Tyrel Grasz is the only senior on the distance relay along with juniors Roper and Cole Viter and freshman Troy Lusk.

Britten said all four improved their splits for a time of 8:36.18 and seventh place.

“There’s a lot of hope there,” Britten said.

Roper competed individually in the triple jump and 400-meter dash but Britten said both suffered after the junior had given his all in the 4x800 relay.

“The poor kid just didn’t have anything left in the tank,” the coach said.

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Roe was close to his personal best time in the 300-meter intermediate hurdles but it wasn't quite enough to make the finals on Friday.

The other two Brady boys who qualified in the throwing events came up a little short as well.

Levi Widick was just off his personal best in the discus but found himself up against outstanding competition. He threw 133-8 and was 13th overall.

Ryan Porter had even worse luck in the shot, scratching on all three preliminary round attempts.

"I know Ryan was very nervous," Britten said, "and he put a lot of pressure on himself. Sometimes, it's the wrong kind of pressure and it can backfire."

Overall, the state meet was just the culmination of a highly successful season for the Eagles, Britten said.

"We had a lot of good things happen all year long," he said, "and there are a whole lot of them coming back so there should be more to come."