Middle distance strength

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Discussing their plans, expectations, & experiences during the season.

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Throughout the track season it was no surprise to the competition where the strength of the boys' team was found: the middle and long distance runners.

That was no more evident than at the state meet at Omaha's Burke Stadium where four middle and long distance runners earned Scottsbluff a fourth place finish in the team standings.

The quartet was comprised of senior Ben Willis-Teff, juniors Matthew Barraza and Shane Burkey and sophomore Collin Maag.

It was Barraza, however, who qualified in four events and medaled in each one.

Among those four medals was a gold in 1600, Barraza's favorite individual race. He ran a season-best time of 4:26.17. Barraza also medaled in the 800 where he ran a season-best 1:57.28 to finish third.

Willis-Teff also medaled in the 800 finishing fifth in a time of 1:58.78.

Barraza collected his other two medals by finishing fourth in the 3200 and earning a third place finish in the 3200 relay along with Burkey, Maag and Willis-Teff.

“Having a state champion on the track was exciting,” Coach James Barker said. “It was his fourth and final event (1600), and he loves that event. He really came through and ran his personal best.”

The Cats competition skills had been honed during the season against some of the top Class B teams in state. That was especially evident in the final state team results.

Three of the top four teams were from the Western Conference. Sidney took second, Alliance third and the Bearcats fourth. Gering completed the Panhandle domination with a ninth place team finish.