

AIN'T NO HURDLE HIGH ENOUGH...

boys leap, hurdle, launch, sprint and throw their way to victory

The track and field athletes looked like a small churning sea as they jogged, stretched and kicked their way around the track. These simple exercises kept the students who would soon be throwing disks, javelins, shot puts and "hammers," running, jumping, hurdling and launching themselves off poles, from getting injured while competing in track and field.

"I was a track and field athlete through middle school, high school and college and it's a sport I have a passion for. I love teaching the different events," head coach J.J. Wannamaker said.

Wannamaker focused on training the sprinters, while distance coach Jonathan Wiebe worked primarily with the long distance runners.

"We are always working on form. We are also working on "the aerobic basic" as we call it, or the ability to sustain a pace over a long distance," Wiebe said. "It's something that requires a lot of time and training, so a lot of our kids spend a lot of time... just.. running."

The 48 freshmen who joined the track teams were lucky to have 20 returning seniors to provide leadership.

"We're going to have some excellent

performances in some of our areas where we do have experienced competitors coming back, but I feel that especially with the new, talented freshmen that we have a lot of potential for the future as well," Wannamaker said.

Wannamaker's theory proved correct during the first competition at the Johnson County Community College Indoor meet, March 28. Juniors Brandon Maxey and Aidan Johnson, senior Jersey Boydston and sophomore Caleb Dopson brought home first place medals in the Distance Medley Relay with a combined time of 11:17.05 minutes. The Distance Medley Relay consisted of four different lengths; 1200m., 400m., 800m. then 1600m.

"I had a great team," Dopson said. "I run the 400 meter. I try to make sure I stay focused and listen to the coaches that are trying to motivate me on the sides, and I try to encourage my teammates because I know it can get discouraging when you're running. I try to make sure they know I am supporting them."

In the field, senior Jacob Benson placed third in pole vault, junior Ned Bingaman placed third in discus and

junior Dalton Lewallen placed second in discus and shot put.

"Whenever I get up to throw, I want my first throw to be a decent one so I have something to go off of," Lewallen said. "On the other throws our coaches try to correct whatever we have wrong so the next throws we have are better because we only have three or four throws to get it right. It's a pretty laid back sport. I like the pace of it. It gives my body time to relax."

Javelins, shot puts and discs weren't the only things flying across the field. Pole vaulters also worked to improve as they prepared for competition.

"The hardest thing in pole vault is if you get a bad habit. It's hard to break it, and that will restrict you from getting higher," pole vaulting coach Mike Alexander said.

Freshman Steffen Seamon was one of the pole vaulters Alexander helped.

"I wanted to stay in shape after wrestling season. At first I wasn't planning to do [track and field], I just wanted to see what it was like," Seamon said.

by Caleb Hasenleder