

# Eagle senior prepared to take center stage again this weekend

By Joey Falkoff

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During Colby High's graduation ceremony Sunday, senior Josh Baden stood atop a podium inside the Colby Community Building and spoke to those on hand after being recognized as the class valedictorian.

At the conclusion of this weekend's state track meet in Wichita, Baden hopes to be standing on another podium.

Only instead of being honored for academics, the Eagle distance runner will look to prove his running skills are top-notch as well.

Baden, who qualified in the 800, 1600 and 3200 meter runs, is expected to have the best shot of any of Colby's six athletes at the state meet to bring home a first place medal. If he were to do so, Baden would be the first individual state champion since Lissa Mazanec (discus) in 2006.

"Josh has a good shot at winning the 3200, which is his best race," said Eagle head coach Goron Rasmussen.

"He can just go and go. They don't have races long enough for him in high school."

Baden won the two-mile race at the regional meet Friday with a time of 10:07, but that only ranks him fifth best in 4A. The best 3200 meter time at regionals came from Andover's Tom O'Connell, who ran a 9:53.

Baden's best time all season was a 9:59 at Quinter April 25, but several factors has Rasmussen confident he will post an even better time when he goes off 7:45 a.m. Friday for his preliminary race.

"The adrenaline will be flowing and quite often, especially in the distance races, they'll have their best times," said Rasmussen. "Josh will run under 10 minutes easily for him. For the rest of us, it's not possible."

Rasmussen isn't ruling out the possibility of Baden winning the 1600, but says it will be a much



JOEY FALKOFF/Colby Free Press

Eagle senior Josh Baden, right, leads a contingent of six Colby athletes to the state track meet in Wichita this weekend. Baden qualified in the 800, 1600 and 3200 meter races. Also headed to Wichita is the 4 x 800 boys relay team of Breck Arnberger, Ryan Baalman, Kalen Rasmussen and Chase Moore; April Gee in the triple jump and Katrina Kaus in the 3200 meter run.

though task.

"That's not quite as good of a race for him, but again he'll have a shot at being in the top three or four," said Rasmussen. "If we were to have a really good day, he might be able to win it."

Baden finished second to Abilene's James Wilson in the mile Friday after running a 4:34, which was his best time of the year.

He'll go off at 1:20 p.m. Saturday and will do so as the sixth ranked runner in the field. O'Connell had the top mark at regionals with a 4:24.

After a few hours off, Baden will run the 800 meter race around 5:30 p.m. He comes into that event ranked 14th with a time of 2:02 at

regionals.

"In the 800, he'll have trouble placing," said Rasmussen. "There's a few outstanding times below two minutes so that will be tough."

Clay Center's Dillon Cowing comes into the weekend with the top time of 1:56.76.

With the large gaps in between his two races Saturday, Rasmussen expects Baden to be at his best.

"He'll have gobs of time in between, so his times will be better," said Rasmussen. "I think if something doesn't happen he'll probably PR (personal record) in all three races."

If his best is good enough to earn three different medals, Rasmussen says that puts him in elite

company.

"If he is able to place in all three, he'll definitely be remembered as one of the better distance runners we've had," said Rasmussen. "I can't remember another runner that's been able to run that trio. That is almost impossible."

Early in the year, many didn't think it was possible for Colby's 4 x 800 boys relay team of Breck Arnberger, Ryan Baalman, Kalen Rasmussen and Chase Moore to even get to state.

Not only did they qualify, they did so by finishing second at regionals and running their best time of the year by 23 seconds.

"They've been working hard all year, now all of the pieces to the puzzle are finally coming together

for them," said Rasmussen.

The 4 x 800 team comes in ranked 10th after running an 8:33.64 at regionals. However, they are just over five seconds removed from fourth place El Dorado, who ran an 8:28.60.

"If all four guys can set PR's again, they'll have shot to place," said Rasmussen.

Should everything go Colby's way, Rasmussen believes a top 10 finish as a team is realistic.

"I don't think we have a shot to win it," he said. "If Josh could place in two maybe three events and the 4 x 800 would place, we'd end up in the top 10 and maybe higher than that. Any time you're in the top 10 at state you've done pretty well."

For Lady Eagle track coach Lesley Wagoner, it's not as much about the team score as it is having her two individuals, April Gee and Katrina Kaus, perform up to their capabilities.

"In this situation with two girls doing one event each, I'm just hoping they get a medal and compete at their best," said Wagoner.

Gee, who medaled last year with a fourth place finish in the triple jump, is back for more.

She qualified for the state meet after finishing third in the triple jump at regionals with a leap of 35-2.25.

Witney Sorell of Concordia and Tanya Friesen of Buhler, who finished ahead of Gee at regionals, are ranked 1-2 in class 4A. Sorell leaped 36-6, while Friesen landed a 36-3. Gee's jump put her fourth in the state.

"The girls that jumped against her said this was the best competition they've seen all year, so that's a compliment to April," said Wagoner.

"She's jumping well now, so I think she can jump a 36. It's time for her to start peaking. Last year as a freshman she was a bit jittery. This year, she's going in with a little bit more confidence. That will be a big plus for April."

Gee said she was bothered by a quad injury Friday and has been resting it ever since.

While it may not be 100 percent by this weekend, Wagoner said

there's very little that's going to stop her from participating.

"You'd have to cut her leg off to keep her from competing," said Wagoner. "She really wants it. We've talked about how she needs to have a good distance at first, because if her quad gets sore she might not go quite as far. She knows what she needs to do to compete."

Though she's just a freshman, Lady Eagle 3200 meter state qualifier Katrina Kaus knows all about competing on a big stage.

Kaus ran at last October's state cross-country meet and was Colby's top girl finisher.

"She doesn't get rattled very easily," said Wagoner. "I don't know that you'll find a harder worker than Katrina. She's been trying to stay up with the boys in practice, because she knows it's going to take a lot for her to be able to compete at that level."

Kaus won't have much time to think about the pressure anyway.

She runs in the first race of the meet 7:45 a.m. Friday.

"It will be a little different than if she had to run Saturday morning, because the stands won't be full when she runs," said Lady Eagle coach Dee Hvoda.

Kaus comes in ranked 10th after running her personal best time of 12:31 at regionals.

Wamego's Breanna Briggs is the favorite after posting an 11:38.

Her regional performance was further proof to Wagoner that Kaus is going to give it her all under any circumstances, even if she doesn't have a shot to catch Briggs this weekend.

"She understands how to push through every quarter until you're really exhausted," said Wagoner. "You won't ever see her dog a quarter or anything, because she knows that's going to make her better. She saw the results of that at regionals."

Getting better is the common theme among all six Eagle state participants, who each posted their best times of the year at regionals.

Now, it all comes down to whether they can carry that momentum with them to Wichita.

## Golden Plains taking six athletes to state meet

Golden Plains High School will be taking six boys to the state track meet in Wichita this weekend in four events as a result of the regional meet Friday in Hays.

First to qualify was junior Tate Bruggeman, who took first in the high jump with a leap of 6-2. This will be Bruggeman's third trip to the state tournament in this event. He has placed at state the past two years and looks forward to success again this year.

Also qualifying in field events

## Bulls defy odds to get top pick

SECAUCUS, N.J. (AP)—The Chicago Bulls expected to be in the playoffs, not the lottery.

This will ease the sting a little. The Bulls won the NBA's draft lottery Tuesday night, giving them the right to choose between star freshmen Michael Beasley and Derrick Rose. Coming off a miserable season and still without a coach, the Bulls vaulted from the No. 9 spot, where they had just a 1.7 percent chance of landing the top choice.

"After this season, we needed a break and I think we just got one tonight," said Steve Schanwald, the Bulls' executive vice president of business operations.

Chicago will almost certainly choose between Beasley, the Kansas State forward who averaged 26.5 points and an NCAA-best 12.5 rebounds, or Rose, the point guard who carried Memphis within minutes of the national title.

"We'll have an opportunity to get close to those guys. We'll really take a long look at what makes the most sense for our basketball team," executive vice president of basketball operations John Paxson.

## Eagle Softball

Colby High's first round state tournament softball game against Perry-LeCompton Friday can be heard on 91.9 KTCC beginning at 6:45 p.m.



Rogers

was junior

Kelton Jones, who placed fourth in the shot put to earn his spot with a throw of 44-2.5. This will be his first trip to the state competition.

In running events, the 3200m relay (4 x 800) team qualified with a fourth place finish in 8:48.19. Team members Jordan Rogers (senior), Dan Rogers (senior), Jeremy Hunter (sophomore) and Andrew Broeckelman (senior) broke their own school record set earlier this year at the regional meet.

Jordan double-qualified for state by running the 800M race in 2:06.16 for a fourth place finish. This will be the first time for the 4 x 800 team and Rogers to earn a trip to state.

Freshman Rilee Spresler fell just short of a state bid by placing fifth in high jump (5-10) and sixth in the triple jump with his season best hop of 40-4.25. He will be joining the team at state as an alternate. Also going to state as an alternate will be Isaac Broeckelman, who ran his season best of :46.85 in the 300M hurdles.

Other athletes and events participating at the regional meet, but not qualifying for the state meet were: Jacy Moss, 100m dash, :14.38; Jenna Bruggeman, javelin, 79-5; Andrew Broeckelman, long

jump, 18-10.25; and Kelton Jones, javelin, 144-10.

"I felt like we had a very productive day," said Golden Plains coach Travis Betz. "We scored 25 points as a team on Friday. Since I have been the track coach at Golden Plains, this is the best showing by a boys team at regionals. Coach (Travis) Smith and I wish our athletes the best of luck this weekend and hope to have each participant bring back a state medal."

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