

Watauga's Middlebrook Wins State Title

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 06 November 2010 15:24

Sophomore Darby Middlebrook of Watauga High fulfilled her dream of winning a state championship on Saturday at Beeson Park in Kernersville.

Middlebrook, who burned up the course in 17:47 (the seventh fastest time in the nation) at the Western Regional last weekend at McAlpine Park in Charlotte, continued her red-hot pace by winning the Class 4A State Individual Championship and pacing the field in the course-record time of 17:52.16. She bested junior Samantha George of Raleigh Millbrook, No.2 in the state and just one second behind Middlebrook in the Class 4A women's individual rankings, defeating her by 23 seconds. George completed the race in 18:15.80.

She also broke George's record of 17:55 set at Beeson Park earlier this year.

"She just had it today, and i didn't," said George. "(Middlebrook) ran a great race. We went back-and-forth for a while, but she had the stronger kick at the end. It's very disappointing, but I did my best. She was just better."

Middlebrook also became the first women's state individual champion at WHS since 1994, when Addie Bower brought home the gold. And Middlebrook, who was 51st at the state meet last fall at Tanglewood Park in Winston-Salem, can also take her place among the great runners in school history.

"This program is so rich in tradition," Middlebrook said. "A lot of people look at us being from the mountains and they don't realise just how good we are. We're one of the top teams in the state."

And Middlebrook is also the top runner in the state following Saturday's impressive performance.

"It hasn't settled in yet," Middlebrook said. "Heck, the regional championship hasn't settled in yet. "But I am so happy to win the state championship. It was my goal all week to come here and to win the championship. George is a great runner.

"I wasn't so sure early on, because I got caught behind a large group of people. But I made my push and (George) and I battled back-and-forth. But when I saw the home stretch, I just made my kick and took off."

The women's team also posted its first top-two finish in ten years. Hannah Barbour finished 13th, and Madison Harman was 20th. But according to WHS coach Randy McDonough, Hailey Middlebrook (43rd) and Julia Roberts (66th) played major roles in Watauga's second-place finish.

"Julia and Hailey were our most important runners today," McDonough said. "Our top three runners did what they had to do, but Hailey and Julia placed very well in the race. Their efforts helped our score tremendously.

"Darby, of course, garnered the headlines today with her state title, but it was a great team effort by our girls."

Green Hope won the team title with a score of 34, besting the field by 81 points. Green Hope

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had four runners in the top ten. East Chapel Hill finished third.

"I've been blessed with some great teammates," Middlebrook said. "I couldn't have done this without their help. I didn't do a lot of running last summer. I spent a lot of time swimming.

"But when we started training, my teammates and our coaching staff really pushed me to keep working hard. This has been a great day for Watauga cross country."

The WHS men turned in a top-ten performance by finishing eighth. Daniel Osborne fulfilled his dream by finishing ninth and earning all-state honors. Osborne, who just missed winning a regional title last week by one second, defeated regional champion Cole Rains of T.C.

Roberson (who was 12th) and the Pioneers finished ahead of Ardey Kell, which won the Western Regional last Saturday. The Knights finished ninth.

"This is not a sprinters course, like McAlpine," McDonough said. "This is a true cross country course. It's fast, but it also boggs down a bit, and that hurt some teams that call McAlpine their home."

For Osborne, it was a huge payoff for an individual that has given so much to the program.

"Daniel is the prime example that hard work pays off," McDonough said. "He was a go-getter from the beginning. He worked so hard to make himself better. He was also pretty hard on himself. His goal was to be a successful runner, and he achieved that today."

For Osborne, who is considering Clemson, North Carolina State and Appalachian State among his college choices, earning all-state honors completes a long journey that began way back at Hardin Park Elementary school.

"I heard about the great tradition in his program, and I wanted to be a part of it," he said. "That's why I've given so much of myself these last four years. I wanted to get the most out of what I could offer. And coach McDonough really helped me. He encouraged me all the time.

"Getting all-state is huge. I really pushed myself to get a top-ten finish. And to beat Rains, after he beat me four times this year, is really special. It was a great way for me to end my career."

Cardinal Gibbons won the women's Class 3A title; Chapel Hill won the men's Class 3A championship.

WOMENS CLASS 4A RESULTS:

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1. GREEN HOPE 34

2. **WHS** 115

3. EAST CHAPEL HILL 123

TOP TEN ALL-STATE FINISHERS:

1. **DARBY MIDDLEBROOK, WHS 17:52.16***

2. SAMANTHA GEORGE, MILLBROOK 18:15.80

3. KAITLYN KRAMER, ARDREY KELL

4. ERICA AMATORI, GREEN HOPE

5. MAURA McDONNELL, GREEN HOPE

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6. ALISON SMITH, EAST CHAPEL HILL

7. BROOKE GORDON, T.C. ROBERSON

8. JESSIE ROSSABI, GREEN HOPE

9. LAUREN COLBERG, GREEN HOPE

10. VANESSA BATESON, MOUNT TABOR

* - **COURSE RECORD**

MEN'S CLASS 4A RESULTS:

1. GREEN HOPE 80

2. SOUTHVIEW 122

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3. T.C. ROBERSON 160

8. WHS 188

TOP TEN ALL-STATE FINISHERS:

1. BLAKE WILLIAMS, NORTHERN DURHAM, 15:29.38

2. CHRIS GARRETT, WEST JOHNSTON, 15:40.44

3. LUIS VARGAS, HARNETT CENTRAL, 15:43.72

4. FORREST LYERLY, REAGAN, 15:45.21

5. MITCH MALLORY, WAKEFIELD

6. RYAN WALLING, GREEN HOPE

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7. ALEXS BEAUDETTE, JACK BRITT

8. SAM ROBERTSON, BROUGHTON

9. DANIEL OSBORNE, WHS 16:06.91

10. BRANDON CAIN, SOUTHERN ALAMANCE

OTHER WHS FINISHERS:

WOMEN:

12. HANNAH BARBOUR

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20. MADISON HARMAN

51. HAILEY MIDDLEBROOK

66. JULIA ROBERTS

MEN:

16. PETER VANDENBERG

37. CLARK BRACKNEY

70. ANDREW VANDENBERG

102. JOSH ANDERSON