



Girls' team finishes 5th in districts

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Chase County's boys' cross country team fulfilled a season-long goal last Thursday by qualifying for the state meet Friday in Kearney.

The team finished third in the eight-team field at the D-5 district meet in Grant, earning the final qualifying spot.

The top three teams and top 15 individuals at districts qualify for the state meet.

The Longhorns finished just three points out of second place on strong efforts by all their runners.

"We got a great effort," Coach Carl Zuege said, but he still feels his kids have a better race left in them this week.

"I thought everybody had to run well to qualify," he said.

Seniors Tyler Talbott and Kyle Bottom led the effort with Talbott finishing third and Bottom taking seventh.

Shane German finished just outside the medals at 17th.

Talbott and Bottom both qualified individually for state last year. The duo, along with Dan Sullivan, ran at the state meet two years ago when the Longhorn team took second and Talbott placed 14th.

Zuege said this experience should prove valuable going into this week's state meet.

The Longhorns have been ranked just inside the top 10 in Class D at times this season and Zuege feels a top 5 finish is within reach of his team.

He added Talbott and Bottom both have legitimate shots to finish in the top 15 individually.

Zuege said the team goes into the meet healthy. The team just missed a state berth last year when several members were struck with illness just prior to districts.

On the girl's side, freshmen Mallory Coleman and Emma Engbrecht continued to pace the team.

Zuege said Coleman ran her best race of the season, finishing just outside the medals at 19th.

Zuege said Engbrecht was devastated that she didn't qualify for state. She was battling a minor injury and some illness and finished 24th.

Those are the kinds of emotions a coach likes to see, Zuege said, when an athlete falls short of their goals.

Zuege said the girls' D-5 district was loaded with good runners this year.

He told his girls that after the state meet, they'll see just how good the competition was in this district, with at least four to five legitimate medal contenders.

