

## **Aidan Wheelock, Sophomore, Minden High School**

In the past twelve months, Aidan Wheelock has experienced the absolute highs and lows of Nebraska distance running. This past October, the Minden sophomore captured the Class C State cross country title, winning by four seconds over the favored Nathan Ostdiek of Columbus Scotus. In May 2016, he stepped to the line for the Class B State 3200 race, and was promptly disqualified for having his toe on the starting line. While he was a longshot for a medal as a freshman, the controversial DQ was still a devastating blow to Aidan.

Aidan comes from a running family – a serious running family. His father Shawn ran the 800 and 1500 and mother Melissa ran distance at Doane College. Shawn is now in his 26<sup>th</sup> year as track/XC coach, including at the collegiate level at Nebraska-Kearney and two stints at Northern State (Aberdeen, SD). Coach Wheelock has coached the Minden junior high and high school running programs for the past 8 years.

In addition to running, Aidan has had a lifelong passion for basketball. Coach Wheelock attended graduate school at Northern State with Tim Miles, Nebraska's basketball coach. Coach Miles, Northern State's legendary Coach Don Meyer and other college coaches have blessed Aidan with their time. Over the past six years, Aidan has played three years each for the Cornhusker Shooting Stars and Mid-Nebraska Hoops the past three years, so Coach Wheelock adjusts Aidan's mileage based on his on-court time. Aidan also plays for Minden High School, and he moved up the bench to be one of the first players off the bench by the end of the varsity season.

Coach Wheelock favors a high-mileage training for his runners who 'earn it.' Last summer Aidan started at 40 miles per week and began cross country season at 60 miles per week, while Minden's other runners ranged between 35-50 miles. Aidan typically runs twice on Sundays, and he'll only take a day off if he's feeling sick or banged up. For developing speed, Coach Wheelock favors tempo runs and race-pace intervals with active recovery. Aidan has not yet engaged in cross-training other than core work, but he expects to add weight-training to his routine before he graduates.

The Wheelock family has moved several times during Aidan's childhood as his mother – the Minden superintendent of schools – completed her education and advanced in her field. That's allowed Coach Wheelock to be exposed to a variety of athletic environments, and he's encouraged Aidan to have different experiences. The past two summers Aidan has attended the 'Run Across Texas' running camp, which bills itself as a 'high level training camp designed to take competitive runners to the next level,' and is led by coaches Justin Leonard (South Lake, Texas) and Mike Barnett (Luling, Texas). The camps took Aidan outside of his comfort zone and revealed what it takes to be a highly successful runner – like national champion Reed Brown, one of his fellow campers.

Aidan's current PRs are 2:05, 4:41 and 10:02. The [www.athletic.net](http://www.athletic.net) website lists him as having the 7th-fastest 1600 and 3200 times in Class B in 2017, but he knows he has a big challenge to medal at State. In terms of future goals, he would like to break the Minden schools records of 4:23 and 9:33 before he graduates. He would also like to win two more XC State championships, a team State championship and compete on a national level.

With over two years remaining in his high school, Aidan has plenty of time to reach these goals. He'll take his next big step at the State meet on May 19<sup>th</sup> – but not too big of a step, because his toe isn't going to be anywhere near that starting line when the gun goes off.

*Jay Slagle is a volunteer writer for the Nebraska Elite TC website. The father of three teenagers, including a Creighton Prep runner, Jay is a self-professed running nerd who was never good at running. He has written two children's books available for sale on Amazon. Visit [www.jayslagle.com](http://www.jayslagle.com) for more information.*