Noah Rasmussen, Senior, Millard South High School

You notice the hair first – the bleached blonde hair, almost long enough for a pony tail. Is it the best distance running hair in Omaha, better than that of Trevor Ramsdell (Omaha South) or Kevin Rice (Omaha Skutt)? While you ponder that terribly important question, you realize this guy is running pretty darned fast. The hair and the speed – that's probably how you first noticed Noah Rasmussen.

Noah is a senior at Millard South. While he's been running since he was in 4th grade, his first love was basketball, and he fully intended to play it in high school and college. However, Dustin Llewellyn, Noah's coach as a freshman and sophomore, spent several months telling Noah that the winter months of his freshman year would be better spent on running. The great Reno Law made a wager that Noah would have to give up on his freshman basketball plans if Reno could beat Noah in a game of 1-on-1. Reno won the game, and Millard South's distance program captured a committed runner.

Noah has consistently improved during his four years at Millard South. His 1600 times have dropped from 4:55 (9th), 4:40 (10th) to 4:25 (11th), and he ran a 4:29 at the Metro meet this year. His 800 times have also fallen, and his 2017 Metro mark of 1:58.8 was just off his 1:57.5 PR from last year.   With good weather and good fortune, Noah hopes to improve both PRs considerably at State.

Noah credits Millard South's cross country State championship his freshman year as a pivotal moment for him. While he wasn't one of the seven runners at State, the varsity team showed him what level of effort was required to achieve greatness. While he's had some setbacks along the way – for example, his appendix was removed a few weeks before State XC during his junior season – his current coach Simon Falcon applauds Noah for his dedication to and love of the sport.

Noah ran 50-70 miles per week last summer, 50-55 miles during cross country, and 40-45 miles during track season. During the build-up phase of cross country and track season, he'll run twice on Tuesdays and Thursdays by adding a 4-mile run in the morning. Typical workouts include tempo runs (particularly during the winter), repeat miles early in both seasons, and 400-meter repeats. His favorite workout is a 12x400 workout, with each lap in no more than 64 seconds separated by a 60-second rest. This past year he leaned on Seth Hirsch for cross-training advice, and he regularly bikes, swims and uses a stair climber to add fitness while avoiding injury.

Noah plans to attend Division II Missouri Western in St. Joe (MO) where he'll compete in cross country and track. Marc Bierbaum, the former track coach at UNO and Dana, is launching Missouri Western's running program this fall, and he's assembled a very strong class of recruits. Noah's final three colleges were Missouri Western, Kearney and Chadron, and he ultimately chose Missouri Western because of the location, cost and his connection with Coach Bierbaum.

Noah earned his first State medal this past fall when he finished 12th. He'd like to add to his medal count on May 19th and 20th. He expects the 800 race to be a great race, with nearly the entire field – including anyone from the first heat, given Franklin Shue's win in 2016 – having a chance at one the eight medals.   Assuming all goes well at Districts, Noah will have a busy Saturday at Burke: the 800, 1600 and a leg on the 4x400 relay. He successfully mimicked that schedule during last week's Metro

meet, so be sure to look for him at State. You won't need a program to find his number; just look for the tall blonde guy fighting for the lead.

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 for more information.