

## **Jacob Kosmicki, Senior, Grand Island High School**

I first met Jacob Kosmicki at the finish line of the 2019 State track meet, moments after he placed 11<sup>th</sup> in the 3200. I asked Jacob if he had any advice for young distance runners hoping to compete at State, and he provided some unique advice. "If you want to be a great distance runner, don't go out for golf your first two years of high school."

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Golf is the primary reason why Jacob was virtually unknown before he burst onto the cross country scene as a junior in 2018. While he competed in cross country as a freshman and sophomore, he didn't see much success. He medaled in a few small races but was not a contender for a State berth, and he eventually realized that his part-time approach to distance running wasn't paying dividends.

Frustrated with the lack of improvement during his sophomore season, his teammate Erik Carrasco convinced Jacob to be his training partner over the winter. While Jacob had run off and on since fifth grade, it wasn't until that winter that he began to fall in love with running. However, he also enjoyed golfing, and with essentially a coin flip he decided to join the golf team in the afternoon and run alone in the evenings. It didn't take long for that juggling act to fail, and by the end of the season he was ready to commit himself to running.

By August before his junior year, Jacob was running 60 miles per week on legs that were fresh from the spring's inactivity. The hard work paid off immediately, and his two lowest finishes of the season were 5<sup>th</sup> place at the stacked UNK meet and 6<sup>th</sup> at the Class A State meet. He lowered his 5K PR by 69 seconds from his sophomore year.

This past winter, Jacob averaged about 40 miles per week despite the brutal weather, and he started the track season with excellent fitness. After running 4:37 and 9:47 at the Norfolk meet in mid-April, he was poised to be in the hunt for a State medal. Unfortunately, Jacob experienced shin pain leading up to the conference meet. Focusing primarily on the 3200, Jacob finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at the HAC, 5<sup>th</sup> at Districts, and then 11<sup>th</sup> at State. Although he ran all six of his 3200 races between 9:44 and 9:57, he felt that he had "left something on the table" at the end of the season.

Jacob's growth as a runner has mirrored the improvement of the Grand Island team. The Grand Island boys team has not qualified for State since 2013, but Coach Scott Hirschert's squad has a solid chance in 2019. The team is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in State after a 3<sup>rd</sup>-place finish at the UNK Invite, and they are seeded 3<sup>rd</sup> in their Districts behind Lincoln North Star and Papillion South and ahead of Omaha Central. In addition to Jacob's 11<sup>th</sup>-place finish at UNK, brothers Juan and Eder Garcia placed 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, respectively. The GI team has 45 boys, and up to 25 boys attended the daily summer runs. Jacob believes the summer miles helped create a close-knit team.

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In addition to golf, which is still a hobby for Jacob, he also played on the freshman basketball team. He never lifted weights before entering high school, and he has yet to incorporate weight training as a

regular part of his running program. His favorite workouts are 8x400 (with brief rest) during track season and 1000 repeats (5 or 6) during cross country season. His most challenging workout is 200 repeats, primarily because he doesn't have natural leg speed.

Jacob's brief running career has included a series of challenges. First, it took him two years to realize that consistency was the key to success in distance running. Second, he struggled with confidence until he finished 3<sup>rd</sup> at the UNK meet as a junior, which is why he encourages younger runners to believe in themselves even before they have the race results to warrant that belief. Finally, he's learned that there's a fine balance between maximizing fitness and avoiding injuries.

Jacob isn't sure if he'll run competitively after high school. He'd like to run a sub-9:30 3200 in the spring, and perhaps that type of success on the track will convince him to join a collegiate program. An avid reader and solid student, his first priority is to find a solid economics or finance program where he can excel. His initial list of business programs includes a number of Big 10 schools.

After another solid summer of 60-mile weeks – at a faster pace than the previous year – Jacob started this cross country season with a minor knee injury, and then he caught a long-lasting cold in mid-September. The UNK meet on September 25, where he placed 11<sup>th</sup>, was his first race of the season. His first critical race will be Districts at Pioneer Park in Lincoln. When I interviewed Jacob in early September, his goal was to be in the mix for a top-5 finish at State. Since then, his knee and respiratory issues have convinced him to adjust his goals. He'd still like to earn a medal at State and, more importantly, see the Islanders place finish in the top 5 in the team race.

Seventeen months ago, Jacob Kosmicki was a better golfer than runner. On October 25, he'll have one last opportunity to prove his mettle on a golf course in Kearney – wearing a singlet and racing spikes.

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*Jay Slagle is a volunteer writer for the Nebraska Elite TC website [www.nebraskaelitetc.org](http://www.nebraskaelitetc.org). He posts Nebraska high school race pictures at [www.facebook.com/preprunningnerd](https://www.facebook.com/preprunningnerd) and race results at @preprunningnerd on Twitter. The father of three teenagers, Jay is a self-professed running nerd who was never good at running. His article about Noah Lambrecht, [The Runner with the Broken Heart](https://www.nebraskaelitetc.org/single-post/2018/10/07/NoahLambrecht), has been viewed over 200,000 times and is available at <https://www.nebraskaelitetc.org/single-post/2018/10/07/NoahLambrecht>. He's a sucker for a good story, so e-mail him at [jay@jayslagle.com](mailto:jay@jayslagle.com) if you've got one. He has written two children's books available for sale on Amazon. Visit [www.jayslagle.com](http://www.jayslagle.com) for more information.*