



Oak Hill won its second straight sectional title, its first repeat since 1991-1992.

Photo by Sean Douglas

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berth.

For the boys, Sol O'Brien finished in fifth place overall with a time of 16:38.6, while Jacob Winger finished right behind him at 16:40.9. Landon Biegel placed 10th (17:15.5), while Owen Jackson came in 11th (17:23.0). Southwood's Braden Sweet finished as the individual sectional champion (16:06.3).

In championship races, a team's final place or whether they advance to the next round can be determined by how their fifth, sixth, and even seventh runners perform. For Oak Hill, Lucas Cates and Landon Ashley were the difference, putting forth season-best performances against stiff competition to help the Golden Eagles retain their sectional crown.

"Lucas Cates and Landon Ashley, two guys that have kind of been off the radar a little bit for us this year, had huge days," Brunner said. "They pushed Huntington's fourth back and they pushed Wabash's fourth back. Landon's our sixth man and he pushed back Huntington's five down the stretch. Those little points here and there are the difference."

Grant County will be represented in next weekend's regional, as sixth other runners advanced as individuals, including Mississinewa's Jon

Alsop (16th place – 17:51.4) and Sam Bolden (27th place – 18:14.9), Eastbrook's Thane Syswerda (21st place – 18:03.9), Andrew Bryant (24th place – 18:10.1), and Devon Legg (36th place – 19:00.3), and Marion's Jonathan Reynolds (37th place – 19:07.0).

In the girl's race, Huntington North finished as sectional champions with a tremendous score of 21, placing five runners in the top seven spots. Junior Addison Wiley won the individual crown, posting a blazing time of 18:22.7.

For Oak Hill, Kinzie Robey ran one of her best races of the season, finishing as the sectional runner-up (20:01.5). Robey had great burst off the starting line, and held off Huntington's No. 2 runner, Hanna Whitney, throughout the race.

"There is no shame whatsoever in taking second to [Wiley.] You're talking about a state champion in track and field," Brunner said. "For her to come in this meet, especially where she was at about a month ago...to be in a position where she was county champ and conference champ and be a sectional runner-up to a girl who is going to be a top-10 finisher in the state meet, it was a great day for her."

Selah Jackson had a rare off day, finishing in 12th place (21:22.6), but Brunner was pleased with how the rest of his team performed. Sadie Wisner placed ninth (21:03.4), Kate Hornocker 10th (21:09.7), Leah Highley 13th (21:41.5), and Emma Bledsoe 14th (21:56.8).

"I thought the rest of the girls competed well," Brunner said. "It wasn't about times. We knew we were a strong second in this. There's no shame in taking second and living to race again next week and hopefully be in a position to get back to semi-state."

Now, for Brunner and the Golden Eagles, the focus shifts to an always competi-

tive regional.

"We have our sights set on bigger things," Brunner said. We are about the team right now, and in the next couple of weeks, we will get faster and faster."

Eastbrook also advanced to the regional, finishing in third with a team score of 88. The Panthers placed four in the top 20, including Olivia Howell (8th place – 20:34.8), Claire Lakanen (18th place – 22:31.7), Rebecca Hammond (19th place – 22:32.7), and Josie Goble (20th place – 22:39.1).

"I am so proud of them," Eastbrook Head Coach Lexi Eckleberry said about her squad. "Coming into it, we kind of knew that third place was going to end up being the goal, and they did exactly what they needed to do. I am just super proud of them."

It was also a special day for Marion, who saw their girls advance to the regional for the first time in six years with a fourth place finish (152). Behind the coaching of Matthew Lakes, the son of Marion legend Terry Lakes, the Giants have seen tremendous growth and progression, especially on the girls team, through the season.

"We are really young, but it's a great way to end [today,]" Lakes said. "I thought they ran great. We didn't have a lot of PR's, but we did enough to get there. I thought they raced competitively. It was great."

"With younger girls, especially, you just want to be careful. You don't want to overwork them. You don't want to do too much. I thought we trained really well since the summer. Once we hit that peak where our pack got close, it just kept them going and really drove them."

Madison-Grant will also have representatives in the regional round, as both Lacey Mayfield (21st place – 22:39.7) and Emma Ewer (27th place – 23:21.3) qualified as individuals.



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