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For the third time in seven years the Hooker Bulldogs brought home the Oklahoma 2A Cross Country State Championship.

“We had five of the seven kids get their personal bests, and the other two missed their best by just a couple of seconds,” Hooker cross country coach Stan Kachel said. “With all the pressure of the state meet that’s a lot better than expected.”

Two weeks ago the Bulldogs looked to be primed for a state title until one of their top runners Jose Cerda pulled a muscle.

“We didn’t run him at regionals, hoping the extra rest would help him recover,” Kachel said. “We expected him to do well, but we just didn’t know how the injury would effect him.”

The plan worked as Cerda shaved almost a full minute off of his best time during the season, good enough for fifth place.

Early in the race Hooker trailed their main competition Velma-Alma and Watonga, and looked to be in fifth place about a mile into the race. But with a mile and a half to go Hooker was in prime position.

“At that point, we knew we had a chance to win,” Kachel said. “As the kids came into the finish line, we were winning every head-to-head race with Velma-Alma and Watonga.”

Beyond Cerda, Hooker had two other runners who medalled; Junior Amador finished 13th and Roberto Barrios finished 15th.

Beaver’s Jordan Jesko was the panhandle’s top finisher, taking third place. Beaver’s Hannah Broadfoot was the top area girl, finishing in 22nd.

Looking back over the season Kachel pointed out what helped earn the Bulldogs this state title.

“We started in June running at 6:30 in the morning, and we take the kids up to do some high-altitude training for a week,” Kachel said. “We just drive 30 miles to Hugoton and we’ve got more competition than we can handle against the great southwest Kansas schools. Then we’ll drive to Perryton and take on all the Texas panhandle schools. That’s what makes us so good, the great competition we face in three states.”

Hooker loses only one senior, and should be right back in the title race again next year.

2A Boys State (5k)Cross Country Championships Results

1.Hooker, 1:30:29.90; 2. Velma-Alma, 1:31:45.10; 7. Beaver 1:37:29.00.

Individual Results (top 50):

3. Andrew Jesko, Beaver, 17:08.00; 5. Jose Cerda, Hooker, 17:24.10; 13. Junior Amador, Hooker, 17:54.00; 15. Roberto Barrios, Hooker, 18:02.00; 26. Jordan McFarland, Hooker, 18:23.80, 33. Ben Rodriguez, Hooker, 18:46.00; 36. Abijah Osborn, Beaver, 18:50.00.

2A Girls State (3200 meters) Cross Country Championships Results

12. Hooker, 1:14:34.00; 13. Beaver, 1:15:16.00.

Individual Results (top 50):

22. Hannah Broadfoot, Beaver, 13:31.00; 35. Naomi Rodriguez, Hooker, 13:59.00; 43. Melissa Chavez, Beaver, 14:13.00.