

IN THE GAME

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In The Game B1



Photo by Eric Taylor

Papillion-La Vista's Isaac Grelk, with the help of guide runner Tim Grundmayer, competes at the Fremont Invite Sept. 12.

Defying the odds

Grelk stays the course despite eye disease

Justin Golba
Sports Reporter

Cross country is a difficult sport. It can be draining mentally, physically and emotionally and requires the toughest of athletes to train and endure for the 3.1 mile race.

For Papillion-La Vista senior Isaac Grelk, he has an entirely different set of obstacles he must overcome as well.

Grelk is legally blind. According to his coach Joe Pilakowski at Papillion-La Vista High School, Isaac has 20-400 vision and a degenerative eye condition called Stargardt disease.

Running is something he did in the eighth grade and immediately wanted to give it a shot in high school.

"I started out doing swim team and got a little bored of that and my mom was a cross country and track athlete so she recommended

it to me and that's how I got started," Grelk said.

Cross country is very supportive and teammate heavy, as your fellow runners can help you improve and bring out your best every day.

"They are all really supportive. They run with me and help me out with whatever I need, whether it's lifting, running or just being there with me so they are all supportive," Grelk said.

Grelk runs with a guide runner during his races. The guide runner process is interesting and something that is very helpful to Grelk and other blind runners.

"I have a tether that I get attached to at the wrist and they match my pace and guide me through and let me know about elevation change or pit holes in the way," he said.

Grelk has to put a lot of faith in his guide runner and trust him to

help him throughout the race. The process is something that Grelk is grateful for.

"When it comes down to a race I can't really see all that much so it's definitely helpful to have one this year compared to when I didn't have it the past couple of years."

Pilakowski said Grelk is a true leader and appreciates his approach to the sport on an every day basis.

"Isaac truly is an inspiration to all of us," he said. "He comes everyday with a great attitude and gives everything he has inside of him. He shows no fear of any workout from a tough 3 mile run to a 13 mile long run, he has done an amazing job with it all. Our team will not be the same without him next year as he has grown into quite the leader that all of his teammates look up to. It truly has been a blessing to our team to have such a wonderful young man be a part

of our cross country and track programs."

As he finishes up his senior year of cross country, Grelk still has some goals he wants to hit.

"My PR (personal record) is an 18 (minutes) 46 (seconds) and I would like to get into the lower 18's and I would love to break 18 this year," he said.

Grelk has also come a long way in his progression as a runner in his four year at Papio.

"My first three years I PR'ed almost every meet. I started out one of the slower runners as a freshman but I have worked my way up and gotten to where I want to be."

As for his future, Grelk wants to keep running and keep improving. He wants to attend either the University of Nebraska at Omaha or Midland University and hopes to run there. As for his education, he wants to major in physical therapy.

NOTABLE NUMBERS

400

Peterson hits milestone
Career victories for Papio softball coach Todd Peterson after his Monarchs claimed the Papio Invite title.

4

COUGAR AIR SHOW
Touchdown passes for Gross quarterback Jake McGregor in a 48-6 victory over Schuyler.

227

MADDEN RUNS WILD
Rushing yards for Ralston running back Rashad Madden in a loss to Omaha Roncalli.

HEADLINES



T-BIRDS KEEP ROLLING
Bellevue West prevails against Elkhorn South in battle of unbeaten Class A powerhouses. **B4**



WEST BESTS THE FIELD
Bellevue West's tennis team secured the first invite crown for veteran coach Steve Lemon at its own invite. **B2**



NET GAINS
Papillion-La Vista's volleyball team captured the Lincoln Public Schools Invite title. **B3**