

Milo Greder, Senior, Omaha Westside High School (published January 2017)

This past fall was arguably the best boys' cross country season in Nebraska history. Seth Hirsch broke 15:00 at Walnut Grove. Three runners broke 16:00 at the State meet. Two Nebraska runners qualified for Nike Nationals for the first time ever. While Westside's Milo Greder might not have grabbed many headlines, he played a key role in Nebraska's storied season.

Late on the scene

Compared to many of his high-performing peers, Milo was a late arrival to the running community. He first ran track in 5th grade and didn't run cross country until he joined the Beveridge Magnet Middle School team in 7th grade. He finished 4th at the junior high state championships as an 8th grader. Milo's father played soccer at Xavier University, and Milo played competitive soccer and basketball through 8th grade.

Milo had a successful start to his high school XC career, consistently running third on the Westside team as a freshman and medaling in three meets, including a 9th place at Districts. At State, he pulled a calf muscle early in the race and finished in 58th place. His coach Andrew Easton described it as one of the most courageous races he's seen, with Milo "basically running the race on one leg."

Milo didn't go out for a sport in the spring of his freshman year. Despite that, he had an exceptional sophomore XC season, placing in the top 10 in nearly every meet and finishing 7th at the State meet in 16:22, a 67-second improvement over the prior year. After the State meet, Milo realized that he had the potential to be a strong runner, and he made a serious commitment to excel during the track season. Unfortunately, he injured his foot playing basketball during the winter and only ran a few track meets that spring.

Milo was injury-free by the summer before his junior year. He ran about 650 summer miles and dedicated himself to improving his form and increasing his strength. Westside had a strong group of senior runners that year, including Jakob Phillips (now running at Nebraska Wesleyan), Abdi Abdi (Iowa Central) and Alec Reilly (club XC at Michigan State). Milo finished in the top 3 of most of his meets, and ran a PR of 16:03 at State, second only to Seth Hirsch's 15:29. Due in part to strong winter mileage (45 miles per week including 1-2 speed workouts), Milo's junior year ended with two all-class gold medals at the State track meet in 4:18 and 9:10.

Finding his way

Milo and Coach Easton both agree that the four months after the 2016 state track meet were particularly difficult. Milo had not realized how much structure and motivation his former teammates (Phillips, Abdi and Reilly) had provided him during off-season workouts, and he struggled to keep himself accountable after the trio graduated. His summer mileage fell to 450. In addition, a car accident near the end of the summer interrupted his training as XC practices were beginning.

During their pre-season planning sessions, Milo and Coach Easton agreed that Milo had a legitimate chance to qualify for the Nike or Footlocker national meets. Although he didn't tell Milo, Coach Easton thought that Milo's slow start to the season might actually help him since the Nike and Footlocker seasons extend into December.

In one of the Milo's first meets this past fall, Milo finished a disappointing 57 seconds behind Seth Hirsch. He continued to build his mileage and train through races until late September, when he finished second at the Rim Rock (KU) Invite in 15:44. He continued to post sub-16:00 results the remainder of the season and finished second behind Hirsch at State in 15:37.

As is common for the top Omaha-area runners, Milo and Seth are friends and kept in touch during the three weeks between State and Nike Regionals. One week prior to Nike, the two joined approximately twenty other runners for a 3200-meter time trial at Millard South's track. Seth set the pace for nearly the entire race before Milo finished a step ahead. Their times were both 8:59. (The state record, set by Colby Wissel of Kearney in 2004, is 8:55.6.)

At Nike Regionals, Milo again followed Seth's pace, finishing 3rd in 14:51 – a PR by 46 seconds – and easily qualifying for Nike Nationals. A week later, he finished 22nd in 15:36 at the Footlocker Regionals, struggling for much of the race after taking a spike to his kneecap. The kneecap issue, coupled with calf strains incurred in training the following two weeks, severely hampered Milo's ability to prepare for Nike Nationals. He completed the muddy Portland course in 16:12, good for 32nd. Despite that result, Coach Easton is confident that Milo is one of the 20 best high school runners in the country.

Coaching philosophy and comments

Coach Easton ran middle distance at Kansas but describes himself as an average runner. He follows the Lydiard school of training, emphasizing heavy base mileage in the off-season, adding speed workouts throughout the season, and training through meets until the midpoint of the season. Coach Easton favors fartlek runs and intervals based on time – such as three-minute repeats instead of 1,000 meter repeats. He uses the same workout plan for all of his runners, although the best runners may run higher volume. Very few XC workouts are performed on a track. He does not consider himself to be a heavy-handed coach; he tries to teach his runners to develop personal accountability, make a life-long commitment to running, exceed their pre-season expectations, and grow as a person. All of his out-of-practice recommendations are purely optional, but his runners know what they need to do to improve.

Coach Easton has purposely been limiting Milo to about 55 miles per week. While he might benefit from increasing his load to 65-70 miles per week, the increased mileage could lead to injuries. Coach Easton feels that Milo is nowhere near his performance ceiling and is capable of a sub-8:50 3200 this spring if he stays healthy and is in a competitive race.

Since Milo has only had one full track season, Coach Easton feels that Milo still needs to develop his pacing skills, particularly when he's the best runner in the field. He faces a similar challenge in practice. Milo is one of Nebraska's best runners in the past 20 seasons, and elite runners like him have to perform their hardest workouts on their own. Milo noted that his teammates help keep him accountable, and his dad consistently reminds him that he needs more sleep.

Workouts, cross training, nutrition

Milo's weekly off-season training mileage has ranged between 40-60 miles. He had a two-week layoff after Nike Nationals, and will reach 55 miles per week by the start of the track season. He utilizes 150-

meter and 300-meter repeats with a jogging start (Flying 150's) to improve leg turnover and top-level speed. Because his track events range from 800 meters to 3200 meters, a key spring workout is what he calls 'Russians' – a track session of varying distances and speeds. A typical Russian set might include a 1600, 800, 1200, 400, 800, 400 and a 200. Milo felt his toughest workout this past fall was an interval session of 7 x 800 in 2:15 in the week prior to Nike Regionals. His favorite workout is a set of Flying 150's.

Aside from running, Milo tries to perform strength training two days per week and an abdominal routine at least four times per week. Westside's strength training program includes squats, calf-raises and Romanian dead lifts. The program's upper-body work is generally limited to high-repetition (10+) exercises targeting major muscle groups, but more attention is paid to leg strength. Milo briefly tried to cross train with indoor cycling, but he didn't like it.

Milo has not tailored his diet to running. He only eats fast food during the two-week breaks after each season, and he eats salads quite a bit.

PRs and goals

Milo's cross country PRs are 17:21 (9th), 16:22 (10th), 16:03 (11th) and 15:37 (12th). After the Nebraska season wrapped up, he ran a 14:51 at Nike Regionals. On the track, he ran 4:41 and 9:49 in a very short sophomore season, and a 1:57, 4:18, 9:10 in his junior year. His goals for his senior year are 1:51, 4:10 and 8:50. His hopes to work collaboratively with Seth Hirsch to post some very low marks during the Nebraska season in order to earn an invitation to some of the national spring or summer meets such as Arcadia.

Milo has already committed to the Iowa State running program, which just wrapped up its fall season with a 16th place finish at the NCAA national championship. Iowa State's NCAA team featured four underclassmen, including John Nownes from Creighton Prep. The 2017 ISU recruiting class also includes Tanner Norman of Colorado Springs, who finished 8th at Nike Nationals.

Race day

Milo's favorite XC courses are Rim Rock (Kansas) and the Nike Portland course, even though the Portland course was mostly mud. His least favorite course is Walnut Grove in West Omaha; he doesn't feel like he's ever run well there. He has very few race-day quirks; he tries to match his sock color to his racing spikes, and he tries to get up at the same time on race days. He eats a snack three hours before his race, and drinks water until an hour before the race.

Looking ahead

Milo's high school career has been a stair step progression of coordinating the mental, talent and effort aspects of running, and Coach Easton feels that Milo is on the verge of spectacular achievements. With Seth Hirsch and Milo running so well, the spring 2017 track season holds much promise.

Jay Slagle is a volunteer writer for the Nebraska Elite TC website. The father of three teenagers, he's a self-professed running nerd who was never any good at running. He has written two children's books available for sale on Amazon. Visit www.jayslagle.com for more information.