



The Parker boys (left) won the Class B team title and Irene-Wakonda (right) won the Class B combined team title and finished second in the girls' division at the 2014 South Dakota State Track and Field Meet. Both teams are from Region 5B, which also had Freeman finish third in the boys' (below left) and fourth in the girls' (below right) division. The 11 member schools of the region accounted for nine first place and nine second place finishes in the meet.



# 5B: A Region Of Champions

BY JEREMY HOECK

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The South Dakota State Track Meet and the Region 5B meet have started to blend together for the 11 schools that comprise the region.

Last year, in particular, proved that.

Not only did a 5B member win the Class B combined team championship for a third consecutive year, but region athletes claimed nine individual titles and nine second-place finishes — of a possible 38 events between boys and girls.

And with a number of standouts on each team back this spring, the 2015 state meet could again play out like a region meet.

"We see all the time at our meets how much talent there is around here," said Freeman senior Cailey Roth.

As is the rest of the state.

At last year's state meet, Irene-Wakonda was the combined team champion. Parker won the boys' title, with Freeman third. And on the girls' side, Irene-Wakonda was second and Freeman took fourth.

In 2013, Parker was the combined champion. On the boys' side, Viborg-Hurley, Parker and Irene-Wakonda went 2-3-4, respectively. On the girls' side, Parker took second and Gayville-Volin tied for third.

In 2012, Irene-Wakonda was the combined champion. On the boys'



side, Viborg-Hurley took first place and Irene-Wakonda was second.

The full Region 5B lineup includes Alcester-Hudson, Centerville, Freeman, Freeman Academy, Gayville-Volin, Irene-Wakonda, Marion, Menno, Parker, Scotland and Viborg-Hurley.

Depth no doubt plays a role in a team producing enough points to reach the medal stand at the state meet, but coaches and athletes across the region say familiarity and stiff competition play even bigger roles.

"When you're competing against somebody who's better than you, it makes you better," said Irene-Wakonda coach Brent Mutchelknaus.

And quite frequently (typically at least once a week), region athletes are lining up next to each other on

the track or competing against each other in field events.

Which means that by the time the region meet — and later, state — rolls around, there are no more surprises.

"I think seeing these teams so often throughout the year sort of raises the intensity level at 'normal' meets," Parker coach Phil Bjorneberg said.

"And when we get to state, it's not such a big deal because we have been running against such high level kids and programs all year long."

Certain rivalries among the 11 schools have developed and thrived over the recent years, and not just in track.

"Some very strong and respectful relationships have been built



on and off the track," Gayville-Volin coach Larry Buffington said.

Still, the athletes are competitive by nature.

"They're all friendly rivalries, but at the end of the day they want to be the ones out in front," Mutchelknaus said.

Coaches also pointed out that their counterparts at other schools have played a key role in developing their school's track programs.

Most of the 11 schools have veteran coaches, such as Dan Evans (Centerville), Rory Hermesen (Freeman), Jerry Kippes (Marion), Ken Bruckner (Menno), Gary Pepper (Scotland) and Bill Hansen (Viborg-Hurley).

"One reason for that strength is a bunch of good coaches that are passionate about the sport of

athletics who have been at their institutions for extended periods of time," Buffington said.

Cooperation among the coaches and schools is also key, as not every program in the region has its own home track. In fact, only Centerville, Freeman, Menno, Scotland and now Gayville-Volin (which will have its first meet this spring) host meets.

As far as what happens on those tracks, tradition is key, Bjorneberg said.

"I think success is contagious and once your school has success, it tends to become something the kids expect of themselves," he said.

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at [twitter.com/jhoeck](https://twitter.com/jhoeck). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

## South Dakota Prep Boys' Track & Field

### Alcester-Hudson

COACH: Brian Haak  
ASSISTANTS: Jeff Sebern, Shannon Hames

VITALS: Class B, Region 5B, Tri-Valley Conference

TOP PROSPECTS: Christopher Lemme (Sr., middle distance), Grant Johnson (Jr., sprints, hurdles), Mitchell Johnson (Jr., sprints), Zachary Ronning (Jr., middle distance), Brock Norseen (Jr., middle distance), Gavin Doering (So., thrower), Samuel Jensen (So., distance), Logan McConnell (So., sprints), Zachary McKee (Fr., thrower), Eli Skoglund (8th, middle distance), Brayden Pulscher (8th, distance)

### Andes Central-

### Dakota Christian

COACH: Cliff Johnson,

Jessica Brouwer

ASSISTANTS: Diane Deurmier, Beth Harrington

VITALS: Class B, Region 6B, Little Missouri Valley Conference, Great Plains Athletic Conference, Fort Randall Conference, South Central Conference

RETURNING LETTER-WINNERS: Reno Longe (Sr.), Owen Medicine (Sr.), Clay Brouwer (So.), Leo Hopkins (So.), Michael Maass (So., state qualifier in 400), Matt Bryant (So.), Zack Rucktaeschel (So.).

TOP PROSPECTS: Burton Archambeau (Fr.), Ethan Blackcloud (Fr.), Tre'zen Doren (So.), Joe Hart (Fr.), Cliffie Johnson (8th), Alex Maas (8th), Hayden Medicine Horn (Jr.), Darrin Trovold (8th), Pearce Vander Pol (8th), Ethan Weverka (Fr.)

### Avon

COACH: Brad Poppe



Scotland's Dan Stibral

ASSISTANT: Tina Cameron

VITALS: Class B, Region 6B, Little Missouri Valley Conference, Great Plains Conference

LAST YEAR: Avon graduated one from the squad, Brandon Kocmich, who placed second in the 200, third in the 100 and fourth in the 400 at state.

RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: Jacob Knodel (Sr.,

state qualifier in discus), Josh Knodel (Sr.), Liam Swanson (Sr.), Alex Balvin (Jr.), Riley Namminga (So.), Weston Frank (Fr.), Jacob Cihak (Fr.), Levi DeJong (Fr.)

TOP PROSPECTS: Wyatt Duncan (Fr.), Tristan Tjeerdsma (Fr.), and Hayden Powers

### Beresford

COACH: Matt Coy

ASSISTANTS: Scott Ebert, Pam Conklin, Mikala Larsen, Jim Nelson, Rob Wilson, Tyler Sorenson

VITALS: Class A, Region 4A, Dakota XII Conference

LAST YEAR: Beresford lost three letterwinners from last season, all members of the team's eighth place 3200 relay: Brad Bogue, Austin Meester and Riley Schaap. Schaap also finished fifth in the 3200.

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TOP PROSPECTS: Kole Nordquist (Sr.), Joseph Kirkebak (Jr.), Oliver Doeden (Sr.), Dylan Andal (Jr.), Nick Adams (Sr.), Hunter Borah (Fr.), Kaleb Peterson (So.), Caleb Carnes (Fr.), Jake Limmer (Fr.), Tim Peterson (So.), Alec Atwood (8th), Cole Homandberg (So.), Hunter Bergland (Jr.), Seth Weiland (Sr.), Justin Dolan (Sr.), Brent Beckstrom (Sr.), Thatcher Schlup (Jr.)

### Bon Homme

COACH: Byron Pudwill

ASSISTANTS: Troy Goehring, Rusty Roland, Jason Hein, Mick Patzlaff, Austin Koch, Tara McAllister, Lisa Kelley, Kelli Hoff

VITALS: Class A, Region 5A, Little Missouri Valley Conference, Southeast South Dakota Conference

LAST YEAR: The Cavaliers were last year's Little Missouri Valley Conference champions and placed ninth

at the state track meet. They lost two letterwinners, both of which were state medal-winners, from last year.

TOP PROSPECTS: Brennan Bares (Sr.), Alex Caba (Jr.), Cole Cahoy (Sr.), Killian Chagny (Jr.), Kaleb Crownover (Fr.), Lucas Crownover (Sr.), Cole Goehring (Fr.), Alan Haataja (Jr.), Ben Hajek (Jr.), Timothy Hajek (Fr.), Anton Hejna (Fr.), Kade Hellman (So.), Kyle Klinnert (Sr.), Chase Kortan (So.), Austin Kotalik (So.), Carter Mecham (Jr.), Mace Merkwan (Fr.), Devin Millen (Jr.), Andrew Mitzel (So.), Chase O'Grady (So.), Dommonick Pechous (Fr.), Nick Rokusek (So.), Nathan Schenkel (So.), Bryce Scieszinski (Fr.), Stas Sutera (So.), Zach Sutera (Sr.), Cole Uecker (So.), Tanner Van Winkle (Sr.), Hunter Young (Sr.)

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### Wagner

### Track & Field

April 7	Ethan-Parkston Early Bird (Parkston)	2:30 p.m.
April 14	Wagner Relays	2 p.m.
April 17	Avon Inv.	4:30 p.m.
April 21	South Dakota-Nebraska Challenge (Tyndall)	2 p.m.
April 24	Jim Flevares Relays (Tyndall)	4:30 p.m.
May 2	Andes Central Inv.	9 a.m.
May 5	Little Missouri Valley Conf. (Tyndall)	2:30 p.m.
May 9	Platte-Geddes Inv.	10 a.m.
May 12	Southeast S.D. Conf. (Platte)	2:30 p.m.
May 15	Ethan-Parkston Relays (Parkston)	9:30 a.m.
May 21	Region 5A (Wagner)	11 a.m.
May 29-30	State Meet (Spearfish/Rapid City)	TBD

### Girls' Golf

April 2	Southeast S.D. Small-School (Fox Run, Yankton)	9 a.m.
April 7	Mt. Vernon-Plankinton Inv. (Lakeview, Mitchell)	10 a.m.
April 10	Burke/Gregory (girls) Inv.	10 a.m.
April 16	Scotland/Avon (girls at Tyndall) Inv.	10 a.m.
April 24	Platte (girls)/Burke Inv.	10 a.m.
April 27	Vermillion Inv. (The Bluffs GC)	10 a.m.
April 30	S.F. Christian Inv. (Bakker Crossing)	9 a.m.
May 1	Avon/Springfield (girls) Inv.	10 a.m.
May 4	Pre-Region 3A (Hillsview, Pierre)	10 a.m.
May 8	Region 3A (Hillsview, Pierre)	TBD
May 18-19	State A Meet (Madison)	TBD

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