

# Top-notch performance

## Powell claims his first-ever state title

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PEORIA — Mathias Powell was out of opponents to chase.

The Mahomet-Seymour senior found himself leading the Class 2A boys' state cross-country meet with approximately 1 3/4 miles remaining in the 3-mile jaunt.

And he'd never relinquish



POWELL

er needed to speed up to stay ahead of Powell.

"I saw the clock at around the 2-mile (mark), and I saw that I had a chance to PR, and that was a big motivator," Pow-

ell said. "I picked it up pretty hard there."

So what was Powell to do?

He began running down the pace truck, with the play-by-play man in its bed noting the driv-

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## POWELL

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On a day in which M-S could not defend its 2A team championship — missing state qualification by one spot at sectionals — Powell made sure the Bulldogs didn't leave Detweiller Park without hardware.

"He's probably one of the most strategic, smart, analytical runners that I've ever met," M-S coach Neal Garrison said. "It definitely helped him (Saturday), but he obviously physically had to do the work, and he made a lot of sacrifices along the way."

Powell took fourth on this stage last year and notched second in the 2A 3,200-meter run at the 2018 state track and field meet. He knows what it takes to hang with the leaders in a distance race.

That said, Powell indicated afterward there wasn't a set-in-stone approach to taking down this event.

"My coach is great at giving me game plans that are adaptable, so I can change in the middle of a race," Powell said. "But the plan was mostly if I felt good to go after it, and I felt pretty good."

Powell hung around a few frontrunners through the first mile. Then, surrounded by favorable conditions — low-50s temperature, slight breeze and an overcast sky — Powell surged and never looked back.

"He knew strategically what would probably happen in the race," Garrison said. "It's just in the thick of things, you don't always (react well to) it because you either take off too fast or you get nervous and you just give up. So he kept a level head."

So steady was Powell that he barely appeared to be breathing or sweating as he stormed over the blue timing mats constituting the finish line.

His inflection hardly changed, either, but he admitted feeling two things as he cemented his win. Excitement and "a lot of hurting."

He kept both bottled up, spurred on by a horde of Bulldogs teammates who flocked to Detweiller for Powell and fellow M-S senior Bryson Keeble (95th, 16:07.47).

"My team definitely is not obligated to be here," Powell said. "They're just awesome people, and they're just so much fun to be around."

The future Villanova runner is hopeful some of his pals will join him at next Sunday's regional portion of the Nike Cross Nationals. It's Powell's next venture before preparation begins for the 2019 track season.

That's one item observers must know about Powell. He's constantly finding ways to push M-S running to greater heights.

"He's helped us along the way to get the state trophies that we got, and now also he's raised the standard," Garrison said. "He showed us it's humanly possible for someone from our town to get first as an individual."