

**PREP SPORTS**

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**State track meet: Cabell Midland freshman runner makes an impact**

by Michael Dailey  
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ONA, W.Va. -- Cabell Midland freshman Jacob Burcham earned a few national accolades last season when he recorded the fastest 800 meter (2:05.50) and 1600 meter (4:38.10) middle school times in the country.

Tonight Burcham will try to make more of a local splash when he takes aim at a first state track championship on the opening day of the 2010 State Track and Field Meet at UC Stadium.

Burcham will compete in the 4x800 and 3200 meter runs, with runs in the 800 and 1600 on Saturday.

He enters the meet with the state's fastest times in both the 1600 (4:14.51) and 3200 (9:20.34). Both are school records.

Knights Coach Chris Parsons attributes Burcham's quick rise through the high school distance running ranks, in part, to his tough mindset.

"He's got a good mentality," Parsons said of Burcham. "When he races he doesn't see himself as a freshman versus seniors.

"He sees himself as a high school runner running against other high school runners.

"Most freshmen are intimidated running against older kids, but he's not.

"The think I like about him is he's just not a cocky kid. He knows what the competition is and he has a lot of confidence.

"But he also knows that there are other guys that are good.

"He respects the sport and who he races against, but when he steps on the line he thinks he can beat them and he's out to beat them."

Work ethic and a few good genes have also helped the talented runner's rise.

"There are a lot of factors with him," Parsons said. "He's blessed genetically. He's just got a natural ability. And his work ethic is excellent.

"I've never given him a workout that he's not been able to accomplish all year."

For Burcham the turning point of the season came in late April with a stunning performance in the Louisville Eastern Relays in Louisville, Ky.

Burcham shattered his personal best time with a 4:16.40 in the 1600, narrowly losing out to Kentucky prep star and University of Kentucky signee Ryan Eaton.

"Coach Parsons has pushed me to run as fast as I have, but I didn't realize my potential until I went to Louisville and competed there," Burcham said. "He (Eaton) ran a 4:15 and I ran a 4:16. That was the first time I ever broke 4:20."

Burcham's talent, while obviously pleasing to Parsons, also adds a lot of self-imposed pressure on the Coach with regard to overuse and risk of injury.

"There's no question he can get better," Parsons said. "As his coach, it's going to be a challenge for me and my responsibility to provide him with the right kind of training. I'm looking for him to make a four-year progression. Each year he's going to get better.

"In the 3200 he could drop a lot of time there. In the 800 the only way to drop that is we're going to have to workout faster, and right now we're not going to risk running him too fast as a freshman and taking a chance on getting him hurt."

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