

## SPORTS

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# Burcham builds excitement for upcoming track championships

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The Herald-Dispatch

CHARLESTON -- Distance races for Class AAA boys should attract a lot of attention at the West Virginia High School Track and Field Championships.

One runner who has helped create the buzz is Cabell Midland's Jacob Burcham. The freshman has the best times in the Mountain State in the 1600 and 3200.

"I don't worry about that," Burcham said. "It's not by grade. It's a race, you line up and run the best you can."

Burcham's been doing that so far. His state-leading times (school records, too) are 4:14.51 for the 1600 and 9:20.34 for the 3200. He's No. 4 in the 800 progression with the top four all going under 2:00.

"There's no cockiness about him," Knights coach Chris Parsons said. "A lot was expected and he's earned respect."

State meet competition begins at 2 p.m., Friday, at Laidley Field in Charleston. A full day of Saturday events begins at 9 a.m.

The 3200 is Friday night. The 1600 is Saturday morning shortly before lunch and the 800 comes later in the afternoon. Burcham's fourth event will be in a relay, either the 4x800 (Friday) or 4x400 (Saturday).

"There's pressure but I really don't think about it," Burcham said.

Other runners to watch in the 1600 are Brandon Doughty of Jefferson, Cody Pelliccioni of Morgantown and Logan Wojcik of Wheeling Park.

Burcham ran his personal-best 1600 (4:19.42) against Doughty in the Gazette Relays on May 1 at Laidley Field. In the 3200, Doughty follows at 9:23.31. In the 800, Andy Bailey of St. Albans leads with 1:53.93 and he's followed by Doughty, Khiry Timbers of Martinsburg and then Burcham.

Track enthusiasts saw this coming from Burcham since he dominated distance events during his years at Barboursville Middle School.

"I knew I had something special coming up," Parsons said. "He's going to run in this program four years. We've got to challenge his progression year to year, but we don't want to get overanxious."



Mark Webb/The Herald-Dispatch  
Cabell Midland's Jacob Burcham leads teammate Michael Niemann during the Mountain State Athletic Conference cross country meet on Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2009, at Cabell Midland High School. Burcham finished first place and Niemann followed in second.

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Last fall Burcham ran cross country and played football for the Knights. He finished sixth overall in the state cross country meet at Cabell Midland on Oct. 31 and helped the Knights win the team championship. That's where he got to know Doughty, who won the individual title, and Pelliccioni, who came in second.

Burcham's first big moment this spring came in the Eastern Relays on April 24 at the University of Louisville's Cardinal Park. He and Ryan Eaton, a senior at Greenwood High who's signed with Kentucky, staged quite a race with Eaton using a late burst to win in 4:15.57. Burcham followed in 4:16.40.

"He hesitated," Parsons said of Burcham's reaction to Eaton trying to pull away on the fourth lap. "He told me he'd never doubt himself again. It was close. I wish he'd gone with him. He's very good at pace changes. He handles them well."

Burcham said Pat Riley, his coach at Barbourville, and Parsons know how to get the best out of their athletes.

"I have great confidence in coach Parsons," Burcham said. "He gets you to peak at the right now. He knows what he's doing and it seems to work. Coach Riley was a great coach, too."