

**HISTORY**, from page 12A

posted times under 19-minutes (and did so quite easily) on their way to placing ninth against a 23-team field that featured nine state-ranked programs.

"I think it's the first time in Anamosa history that we've had all seven of our guys under 19-minutes in the same meet, and to do it in our last regular season race sets us up quite well as we get ready for the state qualifier meet coming up in a couple of weeks.

Anamosa senior Shea Keister, as he's done each of his previous three seasons, has saved some of his best times of the season for some of the biggest meets, and led the way for the Raiders coming through with a time of 17:38 that placed 32nd against the 157-runner field.

"Shea just seems to get better and better during the course of the season, and he's doing it again this fall, too," Sunseri said. "I think our athletes have responded to our coaching and it's paying dividends here at the end of the season. It's really just that simple. Their mental toughness is increasing and when you get that in combination with being in great shape, you get times like we saw at West Delaware Tuesday afternoon."

Seth Countryman bounced back from a tough home meet in Anamosa (by his lofty standards) and finished second on the team and a solid 36th overall with a 17:45 clocking, just seven-seconds behind Keister.

Caleb Loehr added a 55th-place performance after his time of 18:06 while Jack Troester continues his late-season surge scoring 61st with an 18:19 effort.

"But believe it or not, we're not quite where we want to be just yet, even after a fantastic performance like this," Sunseri said. "But we're going to get there in the next couple of weeks. The conference meet isn't what our main focus is going to be. We've been preparing for Oct. 20 since we first got together this summer to work out, and nothing has changed as far as that focus goes. We want to see more improvement against some really good conference competition, but we've saving our best for last. That qualifier meet."

Carver Reiss also turned in a fantastic effort coming through with a 18:27 that was good enough to score fifth on the team and 67th overall while Jacob Loehr (83rd, 18:44) and Braeden Keister (87th, 18:47) also topped the 19-minute plateau.

"I think the kids have seen enough hills now this season to know how exactly to attack them and what it takes to succeed," Sunseri said. "The West Delaware course has some rolling hills and some flat stretches too, which is actually a lot like our home course in Anamosa and the state cross country course in Fort Dodge. While each of our individuals knows what



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Anamosa freshmen Rheagyn Uthoff, left, and Leah Whitson run side-by-side as they compete at the West Delaware Invitational in Manchester Tuesday, Oct. 4, where the Raider girls placed 14th overall against the 20-team field scoring 364 points.

it takes to get better, the focus is, and has always been, to make each other better. When that happens, the entire team is rewarded, and we're getting closer and closer to that being a reality.

"Leadership is using your effort to make someone else better, and I've challenged the kids to take those words and run with them."

The Raider boys defeated two state-ranked teams at the West Delaware meet topping class 1A 13th-ranked Cascade (10th, 252 points) and class 1A fourth-ranked Bellevue (12th, 302).

Class 3A third-ranked Marion claimed the meet title scoring 50 points to top runner-up and class 3A fifth-ranked Western Dubuque (89). 2A third-ranked Tipton (118), 3A eighth-ranked Mount Vernon-Lisbon (176), Center Point-Urbana (185), 3A 20th-ranked Vinton-Shellsburg (193), 2A sixth-ranked Oelwein (231) and Waverly-Shell Rock (244) rounded out the top-8 teams in the boys' standings.

Marion's top-ranked Jediah Osgood topped the boys' individual field dominating by posting a time of 15:29 while Western Dubuque's fourth-ranked Isaiah Hammerand was runner-up with a time of 16:02 as 11 state-ranked runners were in the field.

"I'm so proud of our boys for all they've accomplished to this point," Sunseri said. "To be state-ranked all season long is quite an accomplishment, and also something I'm sure hasn't ever happened here at Anamosa. They've performed as a team all fall long, and I don't expect anything different over the next few weeks."

Anamosa also girls also had a big performance in Manchester, as freshman Ava Remley paced the team to a 14th-place overall standing scoring 364 points against the 20-team field.

"The girls have had some roadblocks this season, but have done a fantastic job navigating through a lot of things to have a pretty good season of their own," Sunseri said. "It's taken some time, but they're getting there. This

is a tough group of kids and I've been impressed by the way they've attacked and come through some adversity."

Remley was phenomenal once again in leading the Raider girls in Manchester, scoring a top-20 finish against the 137-runner field that saw her place 18th overall with a fine 21:41 clocking.

"For Ava, it's not really about the competition she races against that will impact her times," Sunseri said. "The better race she's able to put together the better times she'll be running, and she knows that. There's a ceiling with Ava that we can't even see, and we're going to keep working to get her closer and closer to that ceiling."

Leah Whitson was next to cross the finish line for the Anamosa girls taking second on the team and 86th overall coming through with a time of 23:30 while senior Ashlynn Brown was third on the team and 89th overall after her 23:37 performance.

Rheagan Uthoff was 96th scoring a 23:58 finish while Brooke Heying (100th, 24:16) and Emma Whitson (114th, 25:05) rounded out the Raider individuals at the meet.

Anamosa defeated Oelwein (364), Bellevue (422), Alburnett (512), Vinton-Shellsburg (516), Star-mont-West Central (557) and East Buchanan (569).

3A 14th-ranked Center Point-Urbana claimed the West Delaware girls' team title scoring 88 points while 3A 17th-ranked Clear Lake was runner-up with 100 points. 3A fourth-ranked Mount Vernon-Lisbon (103), 2A sixth-ranked Tipton (106) and 2A 10th-ranked Beckman (154) rounded out the top-5 teams in the standings.

2A 18th-ranked Jesup (8th, 220) and 1A 15th-ranked Cascade (12th, 276) were also in the field.

Mount Vernon-Lisbon's 3A second-ranked Lourdes Mason dominated the girls' field winning the individual title in 18:35 while Jesup's 2A fourth-ranked Mackenzie Wilson was runner-up in 19:02 as nine state-ranked girls took to the Hart Ridge course.

**AMAZING**, from page 12A

years ago), the Orioles have made an incredible seven state tournament berths (which could be increased to eight here in the next couple of weeks) and have won six Tri-Rivers Conference regular season championships.

That's just in the last decade. Those numbers would be a pretty good history for most Iowa High School volleyball programs.

But obviously they do things a little bit differently in Springville.

And it didn't take Howard very long to find success with the Oriole program, too.

Taking over a Springville team coming off an 8-27 overall record and 3-8 mark in Tri-Rivers Conference play (there were no divisions at that time) in 2012, Howard quickly transformed the program in 2013 leading them all the way to not only a Tri-Rivers West division championship with a perfect 8-0 record, but also to the U.S. Cellular Center in Cedar Rapids earning a coveted state tournament berth and reaching the semi-final round.

The senior-dominated team that fall was actually led by sophomore Megan Wagaman, who was well on her way to becoming one of the greatest Oriole volleyball players of all time.

Wagaman (older sister of another all-time Springville great Madi, who would join her sister on the court the following year) led the team with 309 kills and 122 blocked shots. Senior Sidney Hopkins was the pulse of the program however as the team's setter coming through with 740 assists to go with 104 kills and 53 blocks doing everything she possibly could to help her team succeed. Senior Tracy Kilburg (232 kills, 42 blocks), senior Kerrigan Riley (174 kills) and senior Leanna Mysak (163 kills) all played pivotal roles in the Springville success that fall.

The following season, the Orioles tallied a solid 27-14 overall record and were 3-3 in the TRC's West division, good enough to tie for fourth overall and bowed out of the 2014 playoffs in the regional round against Don Bosco (one of only two Springville teams not to reach the state tournament in the past 10 years, the 2018 team being the other).

With Hopkins graduated, Wagaman not only led the team in hitting with 290 kills, but also took over the setting duties coming through with a team-high 400 assists. Ailee Langdon (163 kills) and Jordyn Johnson (108) also helped out offensively while a dizzyingly gifted freshman class (Mikayla Nachazel, Rylee Menster, Sami Johnson, Alyssa Jaeger and Madi Wagaman) were just wetting their appetite.

Senior Sarah Matus was a key back row player on the 2014 team leading the program with 372 digs while also serving at an amazing 99-percent clip.

An Oriole run of three straight state tournament berths and three consecutive TRC West division titles began in 2015 when that freshman class of 2014, graduated to sophomores, but it was senior Megan Wagaman (343 kills) still leading the charge as freshmen Nachazel (199), Jaeger (140 kills, 75 blocked shots) and Sami Johnson (112 kills) helped the team to a phenomenal 32-7 overall record and 6-0 mark in league play. Olivia Dlouhy was the pulse of the offense setting 421 assists.

Springville was handed a setback against Bellevue-Marquette in the state quarter-final round that fall, but the experience of playing at that level sparked the fire for numerous return trips.

In 2016 following another TRC title (6-0) and 31-8 overall mark, the now junior-dominated Orioles advanced to the semi-final round at the 1A state tournament where this time they were handed a loss against Hudson.

Juniors Menster (250 kills), Nachazel (233), Jaeger (218) and Sami Johnson (149) took over the bulk of the hitting duties while Madi Wagaman became the team's No. 1 setter dishing out 550 assists while also adding 144 kills and 58 blocks

for her teammates.

The following season saw one of the greatest volleyball runs in school history, as a now senior-dominated team went 39-3 and claimed their third straight TRC league title going 6-0 yet again making it 18 straight wins in West division play.

This time it was Nachazel leading the team in kills hammering down 284 of them while Sami Johnson (214), Menster (199), Jaeger (194 kills, 95 blocks) and Madi Wagaman (876 assists, 102 kills, 78 blocks) were absolutely phenomenal all fall long.

The seniors saw their careers come to a close in the state semi-final round against LeMars Gehlen Catholic dropping a heartbreaking five-set thriller (19-25, 27-25, 20-25, 25-17, 14-16).

The 2018 campaign would be a rebuilding one, though Howard still guided the program through a competitive 15-21 run that saw the team finish with a 4-3 league record, good enough for a tie for fourth in the West.

Kali Spicer led that team with 235 kills as the Orioles still made a deep regional tournament run before falling at Star-mont in the semi-final round.

Carly Williams was the team's setter that season logging 252 assists while a new and extremely talented freshman class was just beginning to make their mark, as Lauren Wilson tallied 66 kills and was among the team leaders with 42 blocked shots.

Not too much was expected from the Springville girls heading into the 2019 run, but as the girls gained more and more experience, they began to shock the world going on a miraculous regional tournament run, ending with a thrilling five-set triumph over state-ranked Lisbon in the final inside a packed to overflowing Iowa City Regina gym.

The Orioles went 3-4 in league play that season and were 20-17 overall, but made a run all the way back to state as yet another gifted freshman class (Nia Howard, Kennady Breitfelder, Lily Clark, Molly Stamp and Ashlynn Zaruba), got to witness what playing pressure-filled volleyball is all about.

Nia Howard, (Claude's daughter) was the team's setter accumulating 547 assists in her first year at the varsity level while Wilson (206 kills), Morgan Nachazel (189), Savannah Nealman (183) and Clark (106) gave Howard all sorts of options when it came to offense.

Springville dropped their quarter-final contest at state that fall, but it was just the beginning of another incredible run.

The 2020 team went 27-5 overall and tied for second in the league with a 5-2 mark against West division foes and reached the state quarter-final round before 2021 saw the program reach new state tournament heights.

After going 35-5 overall, the best run since 2017, and 7-0 to finish first in the TRC West, the team marched through regionals and into the state tournament where they won their quarter-final and semi-final contests reaching the 1A state championship match.

While the team came up just short of a state championship, a new standard level of play had been set.

Wilson wrapped her incredible career once again leading the Orioles in kills with 228 while Nia Howard turned in a simply mind-boggling campaign setting 920 assists to go with 121 kills, 27 blocks, 289 digs and 71 service aces. Grace Matus, much like her sister Sarah did eight years earlier, led the team with 445 digs.

Could the Springville program get over the hump this fall and claim their first state championship?

They've got a great chance, as their class 1A No. 1 state ranking can attest. The team begins their regional journey Wednesday, Oct. 19, hosting quarter-final and semi-final contests inside Machovec Gymnasium.

I wouldn't bet against them. This program just knows how to win.