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Boys Track and Field Coach of the Year: Kay Keeps Walton at Forefront

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Patrick Kay

The Walton boys track and field team set a program record for points scored in the Class AAAAAAA state championships, and its second-place finish tied its previous best.

Joseph Minecci won the 800- and 1,600-meter runs, also adding a third place finish in the 3,200. Tyson Poole placed third in the 200, Femi Stuart finished third in the triple jump and Omer Inan was third in the shot put and fifth in the discus.

“This season for us was nothing short of amazing,” coach Patrick Kay said. “All our athletes exceeded their expectations in some capacity. They went out and they fulfilled the challenge. They did what they were supposed to do and, in many cases, they were successful.”

The Raiders also performed well at the Region 5AAAAAAA championships, winning by 68 points over runner-up Wheeler. They had eight athletes win events and 13 others finish in the top three.

For his efforts, Kay was selected as the Cobb County Boys Track and Field Coach of the Year by his peers.

“It’s awesome,” he said. “You know, when you’ve got some really good coaches in the county, just for them to think of me in that capacity, it’s awesome. It’s very humbling.”

Kay said a lot of the team's success last season can be attributed to the sprinters stepping up.

"From Day 1, my challenge was to our sprinters. We knew we were going to have a good distance group," Kay said. "We knew that we were going to score points in the field events because that's historically where we're always strong. But I challenged our sprinters. I said, 'We have got to do more to support this team.'"

Kay said Tyson Poole and Tyson McCrary were two of the sprinters who took that challenge personally and stepped up in big ways.

The two, joined by Jaden Redcross, swept the finals in the 100 dash at the region championships, which helped lead the sprinters to contributing more points than they ever have to a team competition.

Kay said he was proud of the way the team came together and stepped up to the expectations he set for them at the start of the season.

"There was a leadership that was really spread out among this group that was, truthfully, it was a team effort," Kay said.

Kay said the talents of his athletes mixed with a great supporting cast of assistant coaches allowed him to be a cheerleader and culture-setter for the team. He said his focus was always on the positivity of the environment and the experience for his athletes.

"I want them all to see me on the side of the fence as they're coming around the track in every one of their races," Kay said. "I want to stand and watch kids go over the pole at 15 feet in the pole vault. My throwers are going to constantly see me yelling their names as they're throwing."