



In her own words.....Carrie Swope

Being on the team this year meant so much to me. Especially after feeling it almost slip through my fingers. I cried so hard the week of States because I thought that I wouldn't be able to compete. And I did so much emotional preparation before coming in to talk to Sergeant Major Collis about putting an alternate in. If it hadn't been for Mason McGowen, Andrew Guinart, Justin Gable, and Jared Kelderman, I wouldn't have come back to the cave with a firm belief in myself, that I could do it. Those boys were my inspiration. I owe them so much, because I know that I would have deeply regretted not competing. Being on the team and winning the state title was the only consistent goal I have had all year. I can only remember wanting one thing more than I wanted this. But in reflection, this is so much more. I will have this my whole life.

I am so proud to call the varsity girls my team mates. They were the best team I could have asked for this year. Tara Blackburn was a great comfort to me at districts, I was exhausted and overwhelmed and felt like I couldn't do it anymore. Carey Gavilanes helped me through all my boy troubles, always reassuring me that "boys are stupid and I don't need them anyway". Sarah Johnson is an amazing person and I look up to her so much for her strength and will power. Faith Folts and Kylie Gouriluk, you can't have one without the other. They are the clumsiest people I've ever met but always get back up again with a big smile on their faces. I have been in Sam Reilly's group this entire Raider season. She has gobs of energy and she never ceases to astonish me. And last of all Chantal Guerrero, the only freshman on the team this year. She not only kept up, she beat the older kids. I've always been behind her on the 2 mile run, she is my inspiration to keep going, and keep going faster.

Sitting in the cafeteria at Camp Tanah Keeta waiting for them to announce the first place winners for the females, surprisingly wasn't the most anticipating moment of my life. I knew we would win. We did amazing. In each and every category. There was no way we couldn't win. I was more nervous for the boys. I wanted our boys to win just as badly as I wanted our girls to win. And I knew that our boys wanted it too. When they called out that SMA boys had placed first, I was instantly filled with such joy and relief I thought I would explode. I didn't explode but I did scream extremely loud. That awards ceremony was one of the happiest times of my life so far. I will always keep with me the memory of the Manatee girls congratulating us. And seeing the boys cry. And knowing that we had done it. It was amazing. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

I know I was only supposed to do a paragraph, but it was so much more special than just one.

-Carrie Swope