



The Best Thing I Saw at State: Tyler Blissett's Greatest Victory Wasn't His Own

By Ethan W. Anderson

The *Best Thing I Saw at State* is a new column that brings to life the moments that make high school sports so meaningful. Through the stories, emotions, and details that often go unseen at the state championships, it captures what the box score can't.



"The team win was a lot sweeter," said Highland Baptist senior Tyler Blissett.

"It wasn't like the individual wins, I've been doing that since freshman year. I never really had a team win. It's not just me, I'm sharing it with my boys, they're like brothers to me. Just sharing with them made it so much more special."

Photos by Matthew Louviere



Finishing in first place is nothing new for Highland Baptist senior Tyler Blissett. On Monday at the 2025 LHSAA Cross Country State Meet, Blissett won his fourth individual state championship, clocking the fastest time in the Division V boys race for the fourth year in a row.



But this year's finish wasn't like the others. This time, he wasn't the only champion. For the first time in school history, the Highland Baptist boys won the Division V team title.

Tyler alone has won more than a dozen state championships as a Bear across the cross country, indoor, and outdoor track seasons. He excels in distance events, but he's also proven himself in the 800m run, triple jump, and even the javelin. Athletic success runs deep in the Blissett family, Tyler is coached by his father, Highland Baptist head coach Toby Blissett, but Tyler's rise has been remarkable even by their standards.

His journey goes all the way back to fourth grade. "I just kind of hopped into practice one day," Tyler said. Coach Blissett remembers it clearly, "We didn't even offer track at that age. He just jumped in, and me and the other coach looked at each other and said, 'Let's throw him in a meet and see what happens.'"

From there, the story took off.

Tyler became a force in Division V immediately, winning the 2022 state championship as a freshman in 16:29.30. A title as a ninth grader could have made him comfortable. It didn't.

He cut more than a minute off the next year, winning the 2023 title in 15:27.20, a Division V state meet record on the challenging course at Northwestern State University. Even with Tyler finishing more than a minute ahead of the field, Highland Baptist placed fifth as a team. Their girls, however, delivered the program's first team state championship that day.

Cross country doesn't always look like a team sport. You must have five runners to count scores in order to compete for a team title. You run alone. You can only control yourself. Your job as a teammate is to finish as high as possible. If your fifth runner struggles, your score can collapse.



Last year, the Bears only had three boys in the entire state meet. Coach Blissett knew what that meant, and what it didn't.

"The three boys I brought last year were all top 12. I knew if we could just put a team together, we could do something special. I'd been telling them we were close, but now I could show them."

This year, they finally had the numbers.

Heading into the 2025 State Meet, something felt different. The Bears rolled in with four seniors, a talented sophomore, and a message that had been drilled in since August: Be a champion!

I asked Tyler when he realized they had a chance to win the team title, as he saw his teammates finish not far behind him. He gave me an answer I wasn't expecting. "Before we even got there, I knew we had a chance as a team," he said. He didn't have to see Sophomore David Nowakowski finish second or Richard Nowakowski finish fifth to realize they had a shot. He knew before he pulled into the parking lot. Now that is the mindset of a champion.



But knowing and seeing are two different things. At the finish, Tyler did his job again, first place, then turned to watch his teammates stream in behind him as they did their jobs too. The Bears finished 1-2-5-21-31. The math started adding up.

Then came the wait. The suspense grew as the team waited for the final results.

Photo by Michael Odendahl/[GeauxPreps.com](https://www.geauxpreps.com)

I was standing just a few feet from the Highland Baptist huddle as the boys gathered, not so patiently waiting on the scores. Someone said, "Coach, I think we won." Coach Blissett instantly responded, "We don't know yet. It's too early. Hang on."

But he knew. "I already had the results," he admitted, "but I wanted those boys to have that moment. In cross country, you don't get a scoreboard. You wait. I wanted them to feel that championship moment for themselves."

And when the announcer finally announced the runner ups, they knew they had done it. The team didn't just celebrate, they erupted!



“We’d been working toward that all season. It was a crazy feeling!,” Tyler said. “When they announced it, I just felt proud, proud of the work, proud of my teammates. I got to share it.”

For a runner who has traveled the country and won on big stages, the high school team experience still hits differently for the senior.

“These are more special,” Tyler said. “I’m not just racing for myself. I’m racing for them. We trust each other. We built that all year.”

That trust wasn’t accidental. “It was a season of learning how to be champions,” Coach Blissett said. “Anybody can say they want to be a champion. These boys had to learn what that meant, how to act like one, train like one, and come together. It was bumpy at times, but it made them who they were yesterday.”

And who they were yesterday were champions, all of them, for the first time.

The father-son journey added another layer of meaning. Coach Blissett explained how they learned early to separate roles. “At practice, he calls me coach. At home, I’m dad. Sometimes I’ll say, ‘Coach needs to talk to you,’ or ‘Dad needs to talk to you.’ Being able to separate the two has helped him be successful, and it’s helped our relationship.”

All of it built to this moment.

When I asked Tyler for one more thought on hearing their team announced as champions, he kept it simple, “I was just happy we finally did it. We’ve been talking about it all year. Finally getting it... that was awesome.”

After all those individual titles, Tyler finally got to share a championship trophy, and that meant more to him than any other win.

And that’s what makes high school sports special. A student-athlete who has accomplished so much on his own found more joy in the success of his teammates. A runner celebrated for individual greatness finally got to see his school, teammates, and community share the spotlight. Highland Baptist is now etched into state history because of the culture built by Toby and Tyler Blissett. Not just in victories, but in belief that they can be champions.

Watching a young man celebrate his team’s first-ever state championship with more emotion than his fourth straight individual title, that was it. **That was The Best Thing I Saw at State.**



Author's Note:

In my role as the Director of Communications, I have the unique privilege of attending nearly all sanctioned LHSAA State Championship events. Although the schedule is demanding, I have the privilege of seeing student-athletes from all walks of life, united by two things: their participation in Louisiana high school sports and their pursuit of a state championship. In my first year in this role, I've gained a deeper appreciation for high school athletics and for all the dedication that goes into making each season and event possible.

Although my current role involves less writing than my previous positions, it has given me the opportunity to return to something I've always loved. While much of my work now focuses on press releases and public statements, I also have the chance to reconnect with my passion for feature writing, this time highlighting what I consider the purest form of sport: high school athletics.

The goal is to highlight the best thing I saw at each state championship and share the unknown stories behind these events, capturing memorable moments for student-athletes, coaches, administrators, officials, and fans.