

## 2011 State Tournament

Jared Ballenger of Fremont Ross placed fourth in the boys discus with a toss of 177 feet 6 inches and qualified for the 2011 State Track and Field Championships in Columbus. The meet will be June 3-4.<sup>N</sup>

# Little Giants are ready



Fremont Ross state qualifiers are, front row, Jared Ballenger. Back row, from left: Coach Laramie Spurlock, coach Johnny Aldridge Alycia Baumgardner, Ellen Silva, Carlea Harper, coach Mike Rankin, Arianna Spencer, Mariah Mathews, coach Travis Bates. DEAN SILVA/SUBMITTED PHOTO

## Freshman thrower part of Fremont Ross state crew

By Kevin Shields  
Sports writer

FREMONT — To this day, Travis Bates is certain that Josh Ballenger's name should don the record board next to discuss at the Fremont Ross track facility.

Or at least it should've this spring and beyond — at least until the new name plates are ordered.

Ballenger, a thrower at the University of Cincinnati, was called for a foul on a throw well over 170 feet, which could have set a record at last season's state track meet. Instead he had a top toss of 154 feet, and had to be a spectator for the finals.

"Josh really wanted that record last year and I think he

actually did get it," Bates said. "But he knew it wouldn't last long, though, because he knew Jared would probably break it as a freshman.

"But he still at least wanted a piece of it to say he had it once."

Josh's premonition came true. Jared — now a freshman at Ross, who was watching his older brother that day in Columbus — is the new record holder, but he is chasing his older brother in one event yet.

"He's still got the hammer throw mark to call his own," Jared said of his older brother.

As for the discus mark, though, that belongs to Jared. The younger Ballenger will be making his first trip to Ohio State's Jesse Owens Memorial

Stadium Friday and Saturday, where he will be the Little Giants' lone representative for the boys team in the Division I state track meet.

Ellen Silva will compete in the pole vault for the Ross girls. Alycia Baumgardner, Carlea Harper, Mariah Mathews and Ariana Spencer will run in the 4x200 relay.

"I wish there could've been more guys that made it out, but it feels pretty good to represent Fremont," Jared said. "Being in such a tough region, it's hard to get out, and I'm excited I did."

It took a record-breaking throw to do it, though, as the younger Ballenger had a toss of 177 feet, 6 inches — just good enough for fourth-place and the final advancement spot. Four

inches shorter and he'd have been on the sidelines for the second straight season.

Jared will be the lone freshman in the field, which includes just three sophomores.

But state competitions are nothing new to the newcomer. As an eighth-grader, Jared established meet records in winning the discus (199-2) and shot put (56-11.25) at the Middle School State Track and Field Championships.

"Jared is just a student of throwing," Bates said. "He started throwing at a young age and he's seen a lot of throwers over the years and also watched plenty of tape."

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# Division I

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This past off-season, Jared had a throw of 206-9 that would have broken the national record for 14-year-olds, but it wasn't a USATF certified event. The toss unofficially topped the national youth record of 201-10 set by Joel Armitage of Nebraska in 1995.

He was the final champion Greater Buckeye Conference discus champion, winning the title with a toss of 172-9. His shot put this season was good enough to get him to the regional meet.

"He'll see some pretty things next year in the shot put," Bates said. "He had some injuries with his hand this year and he took a lot of time off from it, so he didn't get a lot of repetitions with it in practice. But he was still the furthest in the state for a freshman."

Like his brother, however, the discus is clearly his thing. His natural mechanics and ability to not be "an arm thrower" aid in that as well.

"He's got great flexibility," Bates said. "And that's just a God-given talent and gift that really contributes. He's very explosive.

He's also got very good understanding of how to throw."

There was little adjustment needed for the varsity level this spring — other than just learning how to wait sometimes.

"He had a little bit of a stretch towards the middle of the season where he thought he was slumping," Bates said. "But he did realize with the lifting and training, he wasn't going to get the PRs all time.

"So he's learning how to be a little more patient, and he's a understanding now that we do throughout the year, builds up to this."

And like it was for Josh, there could be another younger Ballenger waiting in the wings when Jared's career starts to close. Jared's younger sister, Leah Ballenger, is also a discus and shot put thrower.

As for the older brother, was there any advice he had for his younger sibling who broke the record he chased for years?

"Haven't really talked to him yet, but I'm sure he'll have something to tell me," Jared said.

*Email Kevin Shields at  
kshields@gannett.com.*



Fremont Ross' Ellen Silva sets her hands as she prepares for the pole vault competition Saturday during the 2011 State Track and Field Championships at Jesse Owens Memorial Stadium in Columbus. JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

## Ross shines in pole vault, discus

Silva, Ballenger place in field events

By Kevin Shields  
Sports writer

COLUMBUS — Fremont Ross pole vaulting has been put on the map.

And its most famous athlete is Ellen Silva.

Over the past two years, Silva has upped Ross' school record by a whole two feet. Those efforts not only brought championships and accolades to the school in the event, but also took it to a new level.

On Saturday, the second day of the Division I state track meet at Ohio State's Jesse Owens Memorial Stadium, the Little Giants' best pole vaulter of all time upped the bar even more.

Silva tied her latest school mark with a vault of 11 feet, 6 inches, earning a trip to the podium with a fourth-place effort.

"Last year I didn't do so hot, so I'm happy that I got on the podium this time," Silva said. "I wanted to get a top-five finish this year. I think I could've done a little better, but I can't be that upset because I tied my PR."

Silva was 15th at the state meet a year ago, vaulting 10 feet.

During the season, the senior broke her own school record four times, setting her new mark at the regional meet.

Afterward, she retired her pole. She broke in a new one during practice this week — one she hoped could get her to even bigger heights.

"It's about nine inches longer, but I was holding kind of low on it," Silva said. "It did good though. It helped me over, which I'm happy about. I was going to shun it, if it didn't get me over."

"It wasn't my friend this last week."

Medina's Alex Wasik earned the top spot with a vault of 12.02.

Silva hopes this won't be the last time she's competing for championships. She plans to continue vaulting in college, though her des-



Fremont Ross Jared Ballenger throws in the boys discus finals Saturday during the Division I State Track and Field Championships at Jesse Owens Memorial Stadium in Columbus. MATTHEW BERRY/CENTRALOHIO.COM

tinuation to do so is unknown.

What is known for Ross, however, is that the future is bright as long as Jared Ballenger is in its throwing pit.

Ballenger, a 6-foot, 180-pound freshman who should only continue to grow, threw the discus 172-11 to place fifth in Saturday's finals. He watched his brother Josh, finish 10th a year ago.

"I knew I had it in me to get up there," Jared said. "I came down here just hoping to make it up there and that's what I did."

A.J. Hicks of Solon stole the show, setting a new stadium record with a toss of 200-07.

Clyde's Adam Turner and Ben Wollenslegel were the lone area Division II participants on day two.

Turner, a junior, ran the 400 in 50.60 seconds to place 12th. Wollenslegel, a sophomore, took 11th in the high jump with a leap of 6-2.

In the Division III meet, Woodmore's team of Brian Alexander, Malachi Brown, Andrew Shrewsbury and Cody Curry placed ninth in the finals of the 4x200 relay. The

group ran a time of 1:32.31, a tad slower than their prelim time of 1:31.83.

"The hand-offs were great," Shrewsbury said, who was the third leg. "We just ran a little slower legs than what we expected. Being in lane one, you'd think it'd be easier to push yourself to run faster. I'm just happy we made it to the state finals."

Shrewsbury, just a sophomore, credited his new sprint coach — former Ross athlete Kenny Morrisette — for the relay's success.

"He coached us all year long," Shrewsbury said. "He told us what to do and how to run it."

Despite missing the podium by a single spot on his relay, Shrewsbury came home sixth in the 200 finals, running a time of 22.89 seconds.

"I just wish I would've gotten that last lean at the end," he said. "Another two-hundredths of a second and I'm fifth."

"I'm only a sophomore — I've got a lot of work to do."

On the girls side, the Wildcats' Lacy Nagy was 16th in the



Andrew Shrewsbury, of Woodmore, competes in the 200 meter finals on Saturday during the state track championships at Jesse Owens Stadium in Columbus. JASON J. MOLYET/CENTRALOHIO.COM

3,200 (12:44.46).

Email Kevin Shields at [KShields@gannett.com](mailto:KShields@gannett.com).