

1981 State Meet...

State track meet

Gant erases a bad memory and makes it to Columbus

By BOB MARKER
News-Messenger Sports Editor

Tony Gant bobbed above the surface for the third time. A portion of his life flashed before his eyes.

"I was thinking about last year," the Ross High School junior said while reflecting back to last Saturday at Mansfield in the Class AAA District Track and Field Meet.

Gant was facing the long runway for the third time. He was third and was in danger of having history repeat itself. Last year, as a sophomore, Gant was one of the leading long jumpers in the Northwestern Ohio district. He didn't prove it.

He missed a shot at the state meet with a third in the districts in 1980 and last Saturday, he had one final jump to leap into the state meet in Columbus this weekend. This time, he turned the tables toward himself.

"I lost out (from going to the state meet) last year by one-half inch," Gant said. "I didn't want that to happen again."

On the third district jump, Gant erased any chance of a rerun with a leap of 23 feet and one-half inch, one-

quarter of an inch further than Bill Canada of Marion Harding. It was the best leap in an Ohio district meet this spring.

Gant had to have the jump to get to the state meet; only the top two finishers in the event advanced to the state show.

Ross Coach Norm Bray also admitted he had flashbacks of Gant's disappointment of 1980.

"I thought: 'Oh no, not again,'" Bray said, "but when he hit that last one solid, I knew it would qualify him."

He is one of three Ross athletes to reach the state show. Tammy Haas and Laurie Smith of the girls team will be competing in the 800 meters and the shot put, respectively, for the Lady Little Giants.

For Gant, the final leap reinforced his claim as Ross's top long jumper. In the sectional meet two weeks ago, he had broken a 25-year-old record set by Jim Tiller.

Tiller's long jump was 22 feet, eight inches; Gant bettered that by a half-inch. As a sophomore, he had cleared 22-7 in his first varsity meet. He did not threaten the record the rest of the 1980 season. "Sure," he admitted, "there was pressure. I think it came

tagging from first on a long fly ball by teammate

from my family because they encouraged me so much."

When he did break Tiller's record, the weight fell from his shoulders.

"It was one of the happiest moments in my track career," he said.

Ironically, Gant does not long jump in practice, he simply uses "run throughs" to get his timing and steps down.

Gant will be competing in his event in Columbus at 11 a.m. Saturday. After three jumps, the top seven will go into the finals.

Gant's leap was the longest in districts but Terry Holt of Columbus Brookhaven has cleared 23-8 this season. Holt qualified in the district with a 22-10 1/4.

For the girls, Haas will take a Ross school record of 2:19.9 for the 800 into the state meet. That ranks as the 11th best in the state. The best for the 800 is 2:14.6 by Kelly Greenlee of Centerville. The Ross senior set her time in finishing second in the district meet.

Smith heaved the shot 35-11 and finished second in the district meet. The best in the state is a 42-6 1/2 by Chris McKenzie of West Geauga.



TONY GANT

State track meet

Gant 3rd, Haas 4th

By TOM STOREY
N-M Sports Writer

COLUMBUS — Tony Gant of Ross smiled and said, "I told you I'd make it in the top three. You can quote me on that."

Gant, a junior at Ross, finished third in the Class AAA long jump at the state High School track meet Saturday with a leap of 22-9 1/2. Holt of Columbus Brookhaven was first and Charles Pruitt of Cincinnati Mount Healthy was second.

Both had jumps of over 23 feet.

"I'm satisfied," Gant said, "but I wish I could have done a little better. I was pretty lucky. I had a lot of bad jumps, well, good jumps."

In his six jumps at the state meet, Gant fouled on half of them. Twice jumps of over 23 feet were wiped out because his big toe was barely over the line.

It nearly kept him out of the finals.

Jumping first in flight one, Gant fouled. Then he had a 21-9 1/2 leap before fouling again on his third and final prelim jump.

He stood and nervously watched the remaining three flights, hoping that 21-9 1/2 would put him in the finals. It did, but just barely. He was the seventh and final qualifier of 16 jumpers.

"Oh man, was that

close," Gant said. "I knew if I made it to the finals I could get in the top three."

Gant said that the foul board was giving him a lot of trouble. Usually, they were a lot bigger. But the one at Ohio Stadium was about 10 inches smaller.

"I've got to make an adjustment," he said as he watched the long jumpers in flights two, three and four.

In the finals, Gant, on his first jump, uncorked a 22-3 1/2 jump. "That was a good one," he said. "I had my confidence back on that jump," he said. On his next jump, he fouled but his third jump carried 22-9 1/2.

"I wish I had that second jump," he said. "I know that one was over 23 feet." Both he and the smaller board in the finals?

"No, not really. I just stammered coming up to the board and hoped I would get off a good jump."

Tammy Haas, who represented Ross in the state classic, a shot putter, finished fourth in a career best time of 2:17.61. She was overjoyed.

"That was my best time ever," she said with a sparkling smile. "I'm proud. I'm just glad to be here."

Haas, who drew lane number one, was off with the top runners at the start

of the race.

"I'm just glad to be here."

"I'm just glad to be here."