

1998 State Meet...

First day a success for Ross at state meet

By MARK GRIFFIN
Staff writer

COLUMBUS - Call it a satisfying afternoon for the Ross track and field team Friday at the Division I state meet at Ohio Stadium.

The Little Giants' Rashad Brown finished in a tie for second place in the boys high jump, Demetrius Simms took fifth in the boys long jump and senior Michelle Salas took fifth in the girls shot put and eighth in the discus.

All that, not to mention the Ross 4x100-meter boys relay, which finished third in its heat and advanced to today's finals.

"It was definitely a good day," Ross coach John Elder said. "I haven't ever been down to the state meet and done this good. I don't know the last time we had this many kids get up on the (awards) podium after one day.

"The last time a (Ross) boy was on the podium was Tony Gant in the long jump in 1981 or '82. To have two boys place in one day and, potentially a relay team, is shooting pretty good."

The Ross contingent's performance was even more impressive in the fact that competitors were forced to deal with chilly 50-degree temperatures, an off-and-on drizzle and a biting wind coming out of the north.

Brown high-jumped 6-4 to tie Andrew Meade of Hilliard Davidson, Brent Horst of Athens and Jared Laughbaum of Westerville South for second place. Dean Cotuccia of Olmsted Falls won the event at 6-6.

"The weather was something else," Brown said. "The jump area was real soggy and slick. It was a good thing to have high-jump spikes because it was a factor."

Brown, who jumped a career-best 6-6 at last week's regional at Castalia, said he was "satisfied" with second place. Sort of.

"In a way I am satisfied," he said, "but in a way I'm not. I'm thankful, but I should have gotten a strong second. At one time, at 6-6, the wind was blowing so bad it felt like it just blew me all the way across the bar."

Simms, headed to the University of Toledo to play defensive back for the Rockets' football team next year, had the top state-qualifying long jump of 23 feet, 6 1/4 inches. A nagging groin injury he suffered earlier in the week hampered his jumps on Friday, Simms said, and he finished fifth with a leap of 22-1 3/4.

"I tried to let the injury heal," Simms said, "but it took its toll. I was hoping to see a first-place

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News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison
RASHAD BROWN of Fremont Ross clears 6-feet 4-inches on his first jump at the state meet. He finished in a four-way tie for second.

Ross coaches, athletes pleased with first day of state track meet

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finish, but after my first couple jumps it started to get to me. It affected my running and I couldn't get my speed.

"I wasn't going to give up. I just kept on going."

Simms, a first-time state qualifier, admitted he was hoping for more than a fifth-place finish.

"I came in with the best jump in Ohio, in any division," he said. "That's why I'm disappointed. Stuff happens like that, you just have to take it like a man."

Said Elder, "Demetrius had a nice set of jumps. He jumped a 23-6 last week, which was his best by over a foot. To duplicate that again, who knows when that will happen."

Salas earned a sixth-place finish in the girls shot put last year and bettered that by one place Friday. The senior, bound for Kent State next year, tossed the shot 41-0 1/2 to surpass last year's effort of 39-4 3/4.

"All year I just wanted to keep improving myself, keep beating my old records," Salas said. "Coming here was a big accomplishment. I definitely wanted to do better here."

Salas' fifth-place throw came in the semifinals. She was unable to surpass it in the finals. Senior Krista Keir of Westerville South won her third straight shot put title with a throw of 49-11, the third-best throw in Ohio state tournament history.

"I'm definitely happy with fifth place, because the competition was a lot better this year," Salas said. "The throws were a lot farther this year."

Salas took eighth in the discus with a toss of 130-0. Keir also won that event, with a throw of 152-11.

"The weather conditions were just really bad (in the discus) and that kind of threw me off," Salas said.

The Little Giants' 4x100 boys relay of freshman Kelly Lytle, junior Robert Atkins, Simms and senior Ken Morissette put itself in position for a state title by taking third in its heat in 42.59.

"Everything went smooth," Morissette said. "We had good handoffs and Robert and Kelly ran hard on the backstretch. We were in first place the whole way, but we were on the outside

(lane) of the stagger.

"We still squeezed into the finals. Thank God for that."

The relay, which qualified to the state meet in 42.75, has the third-fastest time heading into today's finals, trailing only Canton McKinley (42.31) and Toledo Central Catholic (42.32).

"The biggest thing coming into the semis is to advance to the finals," said Efrain Moreno, Ross's speed and hurdles coach. "The first goal is to improve on last Saturday's (regional) time and then to have the best race (Saturday)."

"We've been training these boys since October. Right now, we're in our peak phase. We're right in the running."

St. Joseph Central Catholic's 4x800 girls relay didn't have quite the same results as the Little Giants in Friday's finals.

The Streaks' foursome of sophomores Joni Wilhelm, Kerri Zimmerman and Keri Oxley and senior Elizabeth Stierwalt took 14th out of 16 teams in 10:08.34. Their state-qualifying time was 9:50.3.

McDonald won the event in 9:25.97.

"Originally we were just so ecstatic to come down here," Oxley said. "We worked real hard and were hoping to make the podium. We were definitely shooting for a good spot. This gave us a lot of experience, coming here."

In the Division II boys meet, Clyde's 4x800 relay of juniors Jason Hill, Al Preston and Josh Cook and senior Ryan Anstead finished ninth in the finals in 8:12.48, well behind meet winner Mogadore Field's 8:00.93.

"It hurt a lot," said Hill of his lead leg on the relay. "My first lap was like a 55 (seconds) and I'm used to a 58. I didn't have anything left the last lap."

Anstead, who ran the third leg, said he "was strong about the last 50 meters, and then I died."

"I hit the wall," he said. "I went out too fast the first lap."

The Fliers' relay ran an 8:04 at last week's regional, a time that would have been good enough for third place on Friday.

"We wanted top six so we would get our pictures up at school," Hill said.

Lakota junior Charlie Garcia, in the

Division II 200 dash, and Bettsville senior Doug Wolf, in the Division III 400 dash, are still in the running for state titles.

Wolf, who took fourth in the 400 a year ago, was second in his heat in 49.85. St. Joe senior Nick Haynes took fifth in his heat (50.83) and was unable to advance.

Garcia, meanwhile, took third in his heat in the 200, in 22.39. His state-qualifying time was 22.22.

"I'm just running for the gold," Garcia said. "I thought I had a really good start. My goal is to be the 200-meter dash champion in Ohio. I have plenty left."

Woodmore's 4x100 and 4x200 girls relays had a difficult time in the Division III qualifying heats, but the 4x400 relay advanced to today's finals with a fourth-place finish.

The Wildcats' 4x400 of Sara Miller, Keri Harman, Rene Lavigne and Lindsay Travis finished in 4:08.37, well off their regional time of 4:04.67 but good enough to push them into today's championship round.

The 4x100 relay of Laura Wright, Ashley Gahn, Harman and Lavigne took sixth in its heat in 52.09. That relay ran a 51.61 at last week's regional.

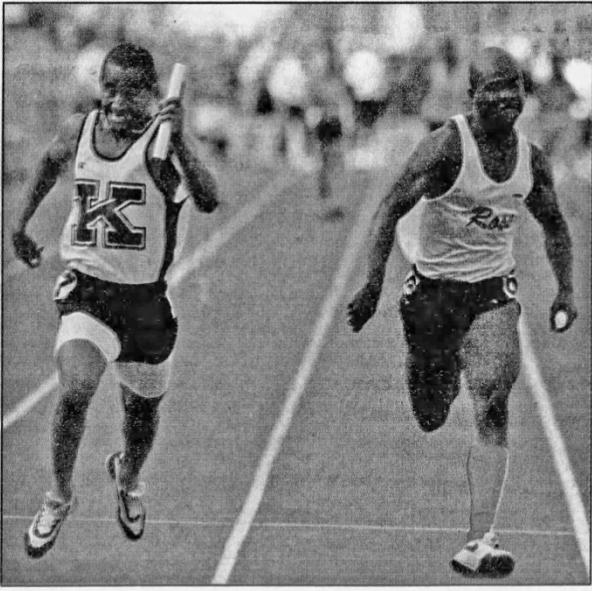
The Wildcats' 4x200 relay of Wright, Miller, Harman and Lavigne had trouble with a handoff and finished seventh in 1:53.12. The relay was doomed to finish out of the running after Wright, running the first leg, and Miller dropped the baton during their exchange.

"They don't know what went wrong," Lavigne said. "The baton didn't even hit (Miller's) hand. We were really happy just to get down here, but we really thought we had a chance."

Woodmore senior Chad Shope competed in the Division III boys 300 hurdles and finished eighth in his heat in 42.43. Shope, a first-time state qualifier, entered the meet with a 40.2 qualifying time.

Two area individuals, along with Woodmore's 4x400 relay team, have a shot at state titles today.

Oak Harbor's Pat Kania will compete in the discus today



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

KENNY MORRISETTE of Fremont Ross races Worthington Kilbourne's Angelo Ross to the finish line in the boys Division I 4x100. Morrisette, along with Robert Atkins, Kelly Lytle and Demetrius Simms took fourth with a time of 42.74 seconds at the state meet in Columbus.

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- Woodmore's girls 4x400 relay team falls a little short, **B3**.
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Ross 4x100 takes fourth

By MARK GRIFFIN
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COLUMBUS — Whether they knew it or not, the Fremont Ross 4x100-meter relay team of Kelly Lytle, Robert Atkins, Demetrius Simms and Kenny Morrisette made history Saturday at the 91st annual boys state track and field meet at Ohio Stadium.

The foursome became the first Ross boys 4x100 relay to even score a point at the state meet, taking fourth in 42.74 seconds.

"I'm happy, but I don't know if they're happy," said an elated Ross coach John Elder. "They got on the (awards) podium, and that was our goal."

"We wanted to beat Central (Toledo Central Catholic), but we weren't fast enough, and that was obvious. But, hey, that's OK. We looked good."

Everyone on the relay agreed.

"I thought we had a shot (at first)," said Atkins, a junior who ran the second leg on the relay. "We did our best and that's all I can ask, so I'm happy with it. I want to thank everybody in Fremont for supporting us."

Central Catholic won the relay in 42.39 while Worthington Kilbourne was second (42.67) and Bedford (42.70) took third.

Canton McKinley, which turned in the fastest time in Friday's semifinals (42.31) finished last in 46.40.

Morrisette, a senior, said he and his teammates gathered together just prior to Saturday's finals to say a little prayer.

"Before every race this year all we did was pray and ask the Lord to give us the strength and thank Him for what He's done for us all year," Morrisette said.

Lytle, a freshman, led off with a strong

leg before handing off to Atkins.

"It was a good handoff," Lytle said. "I felt like I could have done better, but we ran pretty well. We ran well, and fourth place is all right. I thought we had a shot at first, but we didn't necessarily run our best race."

The Little Giants qualified for the finals on Friday with a time of 42.59.

"I think I ran a decent leg," Atkins said. "I don't think that was one of my best legs. I think I ran faster (Friday). Me and Demetrius had a smooth handoff."

Simms, who took fifth in the long jump Friday, said he, too, could have improved.

"Everybody ran a good leg," the senior said. "I thought we did pretty good. I ran a better leg than (Friday). Way better. I was pumped up because it was the finals."

Morrisette's final leg started out strong, but the senior began to drop back toward the finish line.

"Their guys are their open 100 runners," he said. "We're the only team that really sent somebody here without a good, devastating open 100 runner. We're a team."

Robert Atkins, on the second leg, he blows everybody out. Most people put their slowest guy on the second leg but we have one of our fastest on the second leg."

Unlike the seniors Simms and Morrisette, Atkins and Lytle will have a shot at winning a state title next year.

"It's been a lot of fun down here," Lytle said, "especially with these guys. It was a great experience and I enjoyed it a lot."