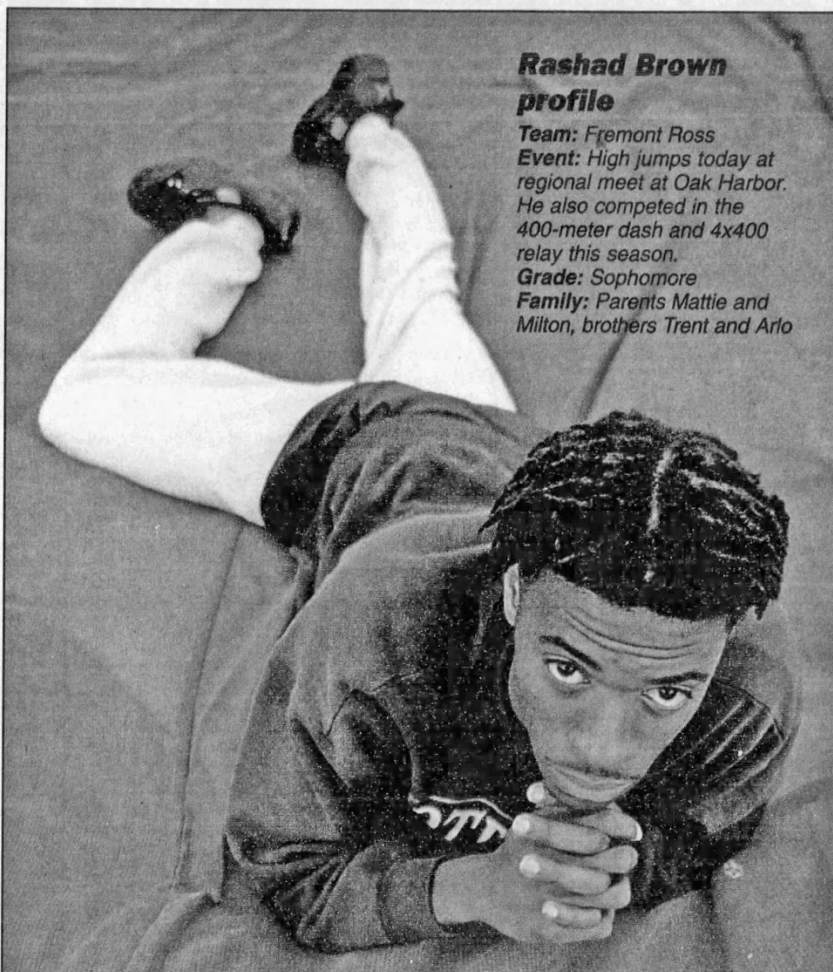


1996 Regional Meet...



Rashad Brown profile

Team: Fremont Ross

Event: High jumps today at regional meet at Oak Harbor. He also competed in the 400-meter dash and 4x400 relay this season.

Grade: Sophomore

Family: Parents Mattie and Milton, brothers Trent and Arlo

Rising Rashad

Sophomore high jumper Rashad Brown already has cleared 6-foot-3.

The Fremont Ross school record might be next.

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

Six-foot-two Rashad Brown wants to get in over his head. Seven inches over.

At that height, the sophomore high jumper would be leaping 6-9 and breaking Dave Kovaleski's 1986 school record of 6-8. The mark is not expected to fall today when Brown competes at the regional meet in Oak Harbor, but Ross assistant track coach Beth Muffler doesn't believe it will be around when Brown graduates in 1998.

"I think he'll get it," said Beth Muffler, who works with

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News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

Brown soars as sophomore

Continued From B1

high jumpers at Ross. "He's got a great vertical now and he's young. He's only going to get stronger.

"He doesn't scare easily. He's gone from being scared of the higher heights to being consistent on the higher heights."

Like 6-3. He hit that mark in the Fremont Invitational this year and also hit 6-2 at several other meets. He placed first at the Galion Invitational and was the champion at the Division I District Meet last weekend at Bucyrus.

His immediate goal is 6-4. When he gets near those heights, he takes more time to focus on the bar.

"The bar psyches you out," Brown said from the Ross High School track Friday afternoon. "When you get to 6-2 or 6-3, it seems so much higher. But it's all in my head."

The Little Giants' top high jumper has had just one season to acquire the mental toughness needed to clear those heights. He jumped in eighth grade before taking last season off.

And while he was off, Eric Browning of Toledo Rogers and Oregon Clay's Brent Combs were reaching the 1995 state meet. They will both be at today's meet, which determines who goes to state.

"When I see them clear a height like 6-4, it makes me want to try even harder," Brown said.

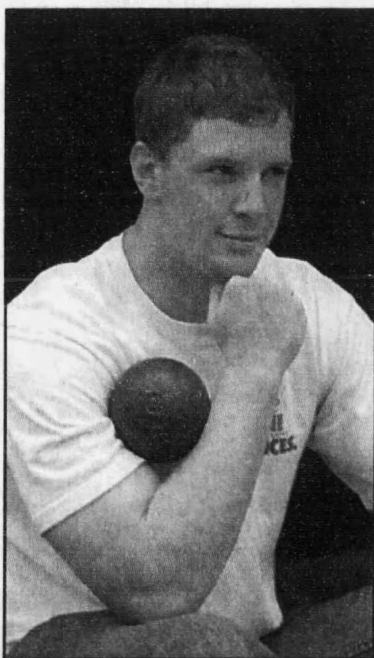
To help Brown get to those heights, Muffler put him on a "tapered" work-out plan this week. He worked hardest Monday, and the amount of jumps decreased each day leading up to today's event.

If that training works, it will help Brown and other jumpers overcome unseasonably cool temperatures.

"To get that explosion, you need the warmer weather," Muffler said of high jumpers.

But Brown has two more seasons, and many warm days, to try for the 6-9 mark and a new record. But unlike his jump preparation, he does not want to take his time.

"I'll break it in my junior year, hopefully," he said.



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison
BRANDON WILLER.

Short of state, Willer completes Ross career

By **BILL BRAY**
Staff writer

Brandon Willer's plans for the upcoming weekend include the Fremont Ross graduation Sunday, but no track competition.

Willer, a senior shot putter for the Little Giants, had hoped at least part of his weekend would be spent adding to his Ross accomplishments at the state track and field championships in Columbus.

He failed to qualify for the meet with a seventh-place finish Saturday at the Division I regional meet at Oak Harbor.

In the preliminaries Willer fouled on his first two attempts.

Needing his last throw to advance to the finals he made sure he stayed in the circle as he threw 52 feet, 1/4 inch.

"He knew what he had to do," Ross weight coach Travis Bates said. "He was still pretty tight on the throw, but he threw what he had to to get in to the finals."

It was much the same story in the final competition. Willer, throwing second, had two throws of 52-2 3/4 and 51-8 1/4. His second throw was a foul.

"I had been getting hyped up for my other throws and that just wasn't working, so I figured I'd

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Willer among select group of shot putters for Fremont Ross

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concentrate on what I needed to do and see if I could explode at the end but it didn't happen."

Willer's best throw this season was a 54-4 effort last week at the district meet. The throw puts him in a select group of shot putters at Ross. Dave Rhodes, the school record holder at 55-10, Tommie Liggins 55-8 and Tony Franks 55-3/4 are the only former Ross stars who have thrown the 12 pound ball farther than Willer.

"It's pretty exciting, I kind of wish I would have gotten the record though," Willer said. "Tony Franks, who was a senior when I was a freshman, threw 55 so it feels pretty good to know that I threw pretty much as far as the guy I looked up to for four or five years."

Franks remembered recruiting Willer to come out for track his freshman year.

Willer contemplated playing baseball his freshman year but

said coach Bates and Franks made sure he came out for track instead.

"We needed the bodies that year," Franks said. "Basically I just gave Brandon a hard time about coming out."

"He and I wrestled together. The one thing that sticks in my mind was what a hard worker Brandon was. He was always out running and not around too much."

Willer was not alone having a below average performance Saturday. The pressure was evident in each of the throwers in the competition. All of the athletes, including the four that qualified for state, were well below their best throws.

"People were trying harder than they usually would," Willer said. "When that happens you shorten up your throws."

Willer closes out his time at Ross with 10 varsity letters including three each in football and wrestling and four in track and field. His many accomplishments include being an all-Ohio

and all-Great Lakes League selection in football, and GLL and sectional champion in wrestling. He was a regional finalist in track as well.

Willer was also chosen as the team's most valuable player in all three sports and was named the recipient of the Baron-Sherman award. This award is presented to the outstanding senior athlete at Ross.

A native of Lindsey, Willer credited the small community with helping him attain the high honors.

"My older brother and his friends and I would play 'barnyard football' for hours. And bailing and working on the farms got me bigger and stronger. I wouldn't trade Lindsey for the world, it's a great place to live."

Willer will say good-bye to Lindsey later this summer when he attends Hillsdale College in Michigan on a football scholarship.

"I just hope I can turn my high school successes into college ones."