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Scholastic Spotlight

Indoor track outlook: Amherst's Fields headed to Baylor

Former Erie Community College coach Sean Kibrick now leading North Tonawanda

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Amherst's Ashley Fields (left) will be taking her talents to Baylor.

Photo by Mark Mulville / Buffalo News

One of Western New York's most accomplished female track athletes ever has made her college choice. Amherst senior Ashley Fields will sign a national letter of intent with Baylor University on Feb. 2.

Fields made official visits to LSU and Columbia, and weighed offers from UCLA, South Carolina and Texas A&M, before deciding on the Bears. She plans to major in physical therapy. She was offered a full scholarship during her visit in November.

"I got a really weird feeling. I was afraid to like it so much because it [is] so far from home (Waco, Texas)," said Fields. "When I went there I was really kind of nervous, but the coaching staff was so nice and the team was so nice, and I already knew a girl on the team who is from Chicago."

Fields holds Section VI outdoor records in the 100, 200 and two relays.

Fields plans to wrap up her indoor season in a big way with a trip to Jamaica where she will be representing the U.S. in a world age group meet with a club coach she met at last spring's outdoor track state meet in Binghamton.

"This is my last year running track and I feel like I may never get an opportunity to run in Jamaica and represent the U.S.," Fields said.

Around the girls tracks

Sean Kibrick has found a home at North Tonawanda after the former Erie Community College coach saw his successful track and cross country programs cut from the college budget in May of 2010. Kibrick had coached all six running sports for the Kats for the last eight years.

This is his first season as the girls coach at North Tonawanda, where he's been an elementary school teacher the last four years. He'll be able to build around sophomore Madison Wawrzynek, who went to states last year in the 3,000 and is part of a 4x800 relay ranked among the top five in the area.

The Section VI championships are scheduled for Feb. 20 at Fredonia State. Defending champions are: Mikayla Pearce of Maryvale (55 dash, long jump, triple jump), Kala Allen of Williamsville East (300, 600), Lisa Kuhn of Williamsville North (racewalk), Kailyn Arcury of Williamsville South (55 hurdles) and Megann Kaiser of Clarence (pole vault).

Kaiser leads Western New York in the vault at 11 feet, 2 inch. Junior Kaitlin McCadden, one of Clarence's top cross-country runners, is second in the 3,000 at 10:34.62. Marissa Saenger and Emily Garrett give the Red Devils a solid core in the distances. Clarence owns the fastest local times in the 4x400 and 4x800.

West Seneca West senior Chelsea Needham, who won the Class AA sectional cross-country title, did a 5:09.7 mile at the WNY Relays. All four runners return from the Indians' 4x200 that went to last year's states: Kristen Harrigan, Kelsey Travers, Brianna Colello and Natalie Barrea. West owns the fastest time in the 4x200 this season, 1:51.77.

With Mallory Clark, Summer Sawaya and Samantha Huselstein back, Allegany-Limestone/Olean looks to repeat as section champion in the 4x400.

Abigail Benson from Iroquois is having a breakout season leading the region in the 1,000, 1,500 and 3,000.

Jamestown junior Olivia Sinatra has qualified for sectionals in the 55, 55 hurdles and the pole vault. Kylie Wilson of the Red Raiders is another promising sprinter.

Frontier returns three from last year's Section VI championship 4x800: Renae Sweeney, Emily Krasinski and Rebecca Love. Rachel Stoklosa is ranked in the top 10 in all three jumps. She is ticketed for Siena next year after signing a volleyball scholarship.

Danyelle Redmond (pole vault) and Alexandra Brown (high jump) lead Grand Island in the field events.

Pioneer's Rachel Prustsman is ranked among the top four in the 1,000 and 1,500.

Freshman McKenzie Kuehlewind of Lancaster took over the local lead in the shot put and hit the state third-place qualifying distance with a 37-7.50 at the Rock N' Roll Throw Offs.

Around the boys tracks

The longest-standing indoor track record in Section VI has fallen. Junior Wayne Gordon of Sweet Home is the new record holder in the 55 meters after he ran a 6.53 at Saturday's Yale Classic. The previous record had been held since 1974 by Jim Palmeri, also of Sweet Home, who ran a 6.54 (converted hand time).

Gordon was one of 241 athletes entered in the 55 at Yale. There were 28 heats to narrow the field. He won his semifinal heat in 6.59 and then used a great start in the final to claim the title.

"Coach [Brian Lombardo] showed me a lot of stuff before we went to Yale," said Gordon. "My start got better because he was showing me in practice how to lean in. So when I got into the blocks, I started remembering everything he said, and I got it down."

Two of the four Section VI defending champions are from Niagara Falls: Cordell Johnson (300) and Brandon Joyce (high jump). Other defending champs are Jaily Twitty of Amherst (triple jump) and Nick Cahill of Kenmore West (long jump).

The Falls is hoping to have Joyce back for sectionals. The 6-foot-6 high jumper recently broke his wrist playing pickup basketball.

Falls coach Jon Robins said he expects Johnson to repeat as 300 champ. "He's got a little more competition this year, but actually that's good because we want him pushed a little bit," he said.

Dale Stewart has been a welcome addition to the Wolverines. Stewart, who has signed with UB to play football, left the basketball team and is now competing in track. He's ranked in the 55.

St. Francis junior Alex Schaffstall helped break the school record in the sprint medley relay at the WNY Relays. Andy Hayes is ranked in the 600. "Andy is a thinking-type of runner who plans out his races," said coach Nate Suchyna. "He and Alex both run the middle distance so they really play off each other."

Canisius senior Cole Townsend, the WNY leader in the 3,200, finished second in the 3,000 at Yale in an impressive 8:41.72.

Two of the top young area runners are sophomore Kalen Sullivan of West Seneca West (the current 600 and 1,000 leader, second in 1,600) and freshman TJ Hornberger Lake Shore (top 10 in the 1,000, 1,600 and 3,200).

Lancaster has two throwers in the top five in the shot put: Jordan Kihl and Phil Lee.

Jamestown's Taylor Bennett and Jake Petrucello-Ross are ranked in the top five in the 600 meters.

Frontier's Alex Desmond and Hamburg's Jared Brucker have gone 12-6 in the pole vault.

Cahill and Alex Alloy are a double threat for Kenmore West in the long and triple jumps. Brandon Maines of the Blue Devils is unbeaten in the 600.

Derick Geiger and Nick Masiello give Grand Island two solid runners in the 1,600.

Junior Brian Cumiskey is part of a talented crop of 400 runners at Clarence. He ran a 52-second leg in the 4x400 at Cornell, led off the record-breaking 4x200 at Yale, and is a 40-foot triple jumper. The Red Devils are competing at RIT on Saturday.

Pioneer's top athletes are Mike Prevorse, leading Western New York in the shot at 49-7, and Nate Andres, who is ranked in the 300.

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