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Scholastic Spotlight

Boys track outlook: Courtney finds the beat

By Mary Jo Monnin
News Sports Reporter

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Dan Courtney plays the trombone, is president of a jazz club and a singer in the liturgical music group, The Glory Beats. A case can also be made he shows pretty good rhythm on the track.

Dan Courtney of St. Joe's has been accepted into Notre Dame. Photo by John Hickey / Buffalo News

The St. Joe's senior has been accepted at Notre Dame and hopes to make the cross-country team as a walk-on. "It's amazing how disciplined he is," said coach Matt Hellerer. "He'll run 12, 13 miles at practice, shower, eat dinner and by 5 o'clock he's at jazz rehearsal. If you listen to him play, you feel like you're in New Orleans."

Courtney owns the fastest time in the 1,600 in Western New York at 4 minutes, 26.68 seconds and he's got the third-fastest time in the 3,200 in 10:03.34. He plans to study mathematics or engineering at Notre Dame.

Courtney is on schedule to graduate ranked No. 3 in his class with a 100.5 average. "A lot of [the discipline] comes out of necessity. It comes from the way I was brought up and it comes through my faith," he said. "I just try to give my best at what I do."

Plenty of talent in NFL

Niagara Falls may not be deep, but it has three of the better athletes in Western New York.

Junior Brandon Joyce consistently clears 6-foot-6 in the high jump and went 6-7 at last year's state meet to finish second among public schools and fourth in the Federation. He just nicked the bar at 6-8 a couple of times at Saturday's Panther Invitational at Sweet Home. At the same meet he went 45-7 in the triple jump.

Before he joins the football program at UB, senior Dale Stewart will help the Wolverines in the 100 and 200 and he's capable of 51-flat in the 400.

Senior Cordell Johnson specializes in the 400, but this year he's also doing the 200 to give his team some depth.

The Wolverines are the defending NFL meet champions.

Kenmore West has a threesome looking to make the trip to Caledonia-Mumford for June's state meet.

Senior Nick Cahill went to states last year in the long jump. He's coming off an ankle injury but looks to improve on his PR of 22-3 1/2.

Junior Marcus Lobdell cleared 6-5 in the high jump in a dual meet on Thursday against rival Kemmore East, but he can also hurdle, long jump and throw the shot. "He's a natural fit for the pentathlon," said coach Marty Madore. The Blue Devils plan to run him in the 1,600 in today's dual meet as part of his training for the pent's 1,500.

Brandon Maines started his senior year running his PR in the 800 at 2:01.44 at the Buffalo Public School's Invitational at All High Stadium.

Lockport boasts one of the top sprinters in the league with Alex Reid, while Grand Island's Nick Masiello has the second-fastest local time in the 1,600 at 4:30.60.

Wayne in his own world

Until someone beats him, the title of fastest runner in Section VI belongs to Wayne Gordon. The Sweet Home junior is the defending Section VI champion in the 100 and 200 meters. His time of 10.94 in the 100 and 22.44 in the 200 are the current benchmarks in Western New York.

Gordon broke a 37-year area record indoors in the 55 meters with a 6.52, and finished third in the state in that event. His fifth-place finish at the indoor nationals in the 200 earned him All-America.

The Panthers return all four runners from last year's Section VI winning 4x100 relay: Gordon, Jordan Johnson, Kyle Berry and Dorian Dixon. Berry was a state qualifier indoors in the triple jump.

Catch them if you can

Chad Maloy, last fall's Class B state champion in cross country, has his sights set on an outdoor title. The Springville senior was third last year in the Division II steeplechase and also ran the 3,200. He owns school records for the steeplechase, 3,200 and three indoor events.

East Aurora, a power in the distance events, has added a wrinkle with sprinter Cody Link. He won the 100 and 200 meters at Saturday's Falconer Invitational, earning running events MVP.

"Another coach who does a nice job with his sprinters came up to me and said, 'where did you guys get a sprinter?'" said coach Walt McLaughlin. "I said, well, from the cross country team, of course. It's not typical to have a 100 or 200 runner come from that discipline. It just shows that we make everyone run distance at East Aurora."

Last fall the Blue Devils won the cross country Class B state title. The state champions running track this spring are: Kevin O'Connor, Alex Weberg, Sean Phillips, Gene Barritot, Brendan Keany, Elliott Martynkiewicz, Dan Egan, Luke Wolfing and Larkin Bahanan.

West Seneca West's 4x400 relay is riding a wave of confidence after last week's 72-69 win over Hamburg.

The ECIC II dual meet came down to winner-take-all in the 4x400. The victory was the first for the senior class over Hamburg. Sophomore Kalen Sullivan anchored the relay. He owns the second-fastest time in Western New York in the 800 (1:56.34), set at the Batavia Invitational. Sullivan and senior Joe O'Mara are returning members of the 4x800 team that broke the school record at last year's sectionals.

Returning sectional qualifiers include junior Austin Alvarado (400), Oscar Lopez (shot put), Jamie Tobias (steeplechase) and Collin Inglut (400 hurdles).

Boost in numbers, talent at W. Seneca East

Numbers are up at West Seneca East and so is the talent. Josh Carbone, Andy Smigiera and Sean Sullivan are some of the Trojans' top sprinters and jumpers. Bayley Zubler and Matt Glaub look to make a strong showing at sectionals in the steeplechase.

Starpoint's top athlete, senior Jake Wray, has Western New York's fastest time in the 110 hurdles at 14.89, a state caliber time. Senior Dalton Maska is ranked in the top 10 in the throws. Two sophomores will be contenders in their events: A.J. Joslin in 800 and Paul Swartz in the 3,200. Senior Tyler Robinson leads the Spartans in the sprints.

Plenty of talent returns for Randolph as it chases its fourth straight CCAA title. Back for the Cardinals are defending Section VI Division II champions Mason Burch (long jump) and Anthony Schwartz (400), both juniors.

Junior Dane Dechow has a 16.1 in the 110 hurdles and is a 40-foot triple jumper. Freshman Zach Jackson looks strong in the 800 and 1,600. Senior Travis Nagle hopes he can clear 14 feet in the pole vault, as he did last summer.

Pioneer has won an impressive seven ECIC titles in a row. Looking to extend that streak is a strong class of juniors. Thrower Mike Prevorse just broke the school record in the shot put (51-7) and has a 153-3 in discus.

Other juniors to watch are: Nate Andres (sprints), Nate Smith (distance) and Mark Lemon (jumps).

Daryl Spencer of Cleveland Hill won the Section VI title in the 400 hurdles last year as a sophomore. He has the second-fastest time in the section behind Taylor Bennett of Jamestown. Spencer opened the season by breaking the school record in the 110h with a 15.24.

Senior Frank Farinacci (400) and junior Devin Gibson (100, 200) will be among the Eagles' top seeds at sectionals.

Look for senior Matt Allen of Olean to repeat as Division II pole vault and 110 hurdles champion. Allen also anchors the Huskies' 4x100 relay with Maleke Fuentes, Tevin McDade and Tyler Plaud.

Lake Shore's TJ Hornberger is only a freshman, but he competed at states this indoor season in the mile, running a 4:32. Already this season he has a 2:01 in the 800 and had his mile time drop from last season. Senior Torrell Myles has crushed his times from last season in the 100 and the 200. Senior Jake Grassmick is off solidly in the shot with a 44-10.

Amherst junior Jailyn Twitty is leading the state in the triple jump with a school record of 46-6 and is on pace with a 22-6 to break the school record in the long jump. Both distances are the best in Western New York this season.

Senior Cameron Mathews is the school record holder in the 100 with a 10.94, run last year. Brandon Borden holds the Tigers' best hope for a sectional title in the 110 hurdles (15.34). Sophomore Adam Murphy will be in the thick of the race for sectional titles in the 1,600 and 3,200. He'll team with Kyle Cotter, Steve Klementowski and Zak Fox as the Tigers go after the section title in the 4x800 relay.

The expectations are high for Alden's 4x100 (plus the alternate) that placed fifth in Division II at the states as all the runners return: Jordan Hall, Dakota Peel, Travis DeMuth, Alex Blood and Kyle Stewart.

JFK earn rare win over rival

JFK's 74-67 win over Cleveland Hill was just the program's third dual meet win over its cross-town rival in 35 years. The Bears have a solid core with Ken Minorczyk (400), Justin Jasinski (200/400) and Nigel Cordulla (1,600).

Junior Leo Grucella is Lancaster's top sprinter and jumper. Senior Jake Wukovits runs a sub-two-minute in the 800 and 51.0 in the 400.

Williamsville North, which drops from ECIC I to II, is a senior-laden team led by sprinters Collin Presetno, Dan Teal and Ruben Noel. Charley Kenyon is a returning state qualifier in the 110 hurdles; he also won the indoor 55 hurdles at sectionals.

Barker junior Tyler Scheving is the local leader in the 800 and No. 2 in the 400. At the Batavia Invitational, he broke his own league record in the 800 with a 1:55.54.

Akron returns all of its runners from last year's 4x100 that went to states: Josh Cory, Russ Catalano (alternate), Ian Brown, Brad Borowczyk and Jason Donovan. The Tigers already have a dual meet win over defending Niagara-Orleans league champion Albion.

The top distance athlete in the Buffalo Public Schools' Scalp and Blade is Arturo Salas of Hutch-Tech. He went to states in cross country and is a defending All-High champ. The Engineers also have the top sprinter in Emmanuel Cott, the defending hurdles champ.

OTC's Karlton Alsqaaf is eyeing the league title in the triple jump while McKinley's Charles Cardwell has already cleared 6-0 in the high jump.

Returning Section VI champs

Division I: 100/200, Wayne Gordon (Sweet Home); 400, Cordell Johnson (Niagara Falls); high jump, Brandon Joyce (Niagara Falls); long jump, Nick Cahill (Kenmore West).

Division II: 100, D'Ante Mims (Medina); 400, Anthony Schwartz (Randolph); 1,600, Jeremy Rushok (Akron); PV/110 hurdles, Matt Allen (Olean); long jump, Mason Burch (Randolph); 400 hurdles, Daryl Spencer (Cleveland Hill); steeplechase, Chad Maloy (Springville).

mmonnin@buffnews.com