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## Section VI girls give it their all at states

Allen, Pearce among Day One standouts; Fields ailing

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CALEDONIA -- Kala Allen met her track idol this past offseason. Now she's trying to take his words and run with them.

The Williamsville East junior met Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt this past March after she was invited to compete in Jamaica. Bolt is a three-time World and Olympic gold medalist and the Olympic record holder in the 100 meters and the 200 meters.

On Friday, Allen was at Caledonia-Mumford competing in the biggest meet of her high school career to date, the New York State Track and Field Championships. Allen was one of 1,626 entries from 419 schools.

Kala Allen of Williamsville East posted a time of 56.56 seconds in taking third in the 400, earning a spot in today's Federation final. Photo by James P. McCoy / Buffalo News

"He's like my idol," said Allen. "He was hanging out on the infield and we went up and talked to him. He asked us what times we run and where we're from. We were asking him how he got to be so good. I remember I asked him what were the most important ways to gain strength and he said [to work] your core, and I didn't expect that at all."

Like her running idol, Allen was performing at her best on the season's biggest stage. She ran her season best, 56.56 seconds, to place third in the Division I 400 meters. Allen, the Section VI record holder in the event, advanced to today's Federation finals.

Meanwhile, Allen's best friend and ECIC rival, Ashley Fields, had a rough day on the track. The Amherst senior, competing in just the 200 meters because of a sore back, fell to the track after winning her heat in the Division I 200 meters in 24.46. Fields is still recovering from a car accident last month.

Fields laid on the track in the holding area for five minutes before being attended to by medics. Allen and teammate Emily Irish-Ryan comforted Fields as she laid on her stomach, sobbing into her folded arms. She eventually limped off the track under her own power with her parents at her side. Prospects for her returning to the track for today's 200 final are bleak.

"I'm so worried about her," Irish-Ryan said of Fields. "She was hurting, probably from the car accident. She definitely gave it her all. I thought she was going to be fine and then all of a sudden you could tell she was hurting."

There were no state champions among Section VI girls on the first day, but there were plenty of strong performances.

Junior Mikayla Pearce of Maryvale finished state runner-up in the Division II long jump for the second year in a row. Darkness was setting in and a light rain was falling during Pearce's event. Her 18 feet, 9 inches, Pearce's last jump in the final, was two inches behind the winner.

"I'm over it. I've got [today], the Federations, will bring something bigger. I'm pretty happy, I'm getting back in there. That was my best jump by six inches," said Pearce.

Junior Emily Krasinski of Frontier placed third in Division I 800, running her season-best by two-tenths of a second.

"You have to go out hard, but you really have to control yourself. If you go out too fast, it messes your pace all up. Fast, but controlled," said Krasinski, who ran in a relay last year. "Was it fun? Yes, but it hurts."

Falconer's 400 relay of Makalia Haveron, Amasharay McDonald, Hannah Courtney and Mary Strand placed third in Division II in 49.44.

There's no slowing East Aurora. The Blue Devils' 1,600 relay, dropped four seconds off their previous best time to come in third. The first two runners, Rebekah Zee and Sarah Mars, ran split times under 60 seconds, third runner Hannah Rice ran her personal best and anchor Marta McLaughlin brought the team home in 58 seconds.

McLaughlin also went a season-best 2:15.01 to place fourth in the Division II 800.

Two state records fell. Senior Aisling Cuffe of Section I Cornwall broke the record in the 3,000 in 9:16.63. Senior Jordan Yamoah of Section I Arlington cleared 16 feet, 7 inches to break her own mark in the pole vault.

National record holder, Jen Suhr, a Fredonia native, presented the girls pole vault awards.

The cover of the state meet game program featured photographs of two Section VI athletes: Anthony Schwartz of Randolph and Pearce of Maryvale.

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