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South's Arcury is a cut above

Hurdler wins the only title for Section VI at states

By **Mary Jo Monnin**
News Sports Reporter



CALEDONIA --- Kailyn Arcury had two things to show for her run in the 100 hurdle finals -- a state title and a bleeding cut on her pinky finger.

The Williamsville South junior survived both to become the only girl from Section VI to win a title at the New York State Track and Field Championships. The two-day event concluded on Saturday at the Hamilton Field Sports Complex at Caledonia-Mumford High School.

Williamsville South's Kailyn Arcury was the lone Section VI girls state champion, taking first in the 100 hurdles. Photo by James P. McCoy

Arcury ran 14.28 to win her hurdle race by .01. During the race, she was accidentally cut on her left finger by the fingernail of a competitor in an adjacent lane. It's not common in hurdles races, but it happens.

Arcury was the first one over the final hurdle in an exciting race, but the field closed in fast on the final sprint to the finish line.

"That girl [Lexus Harney of Mount Vernon] caught me, and I just ran as fast as I could," she said. "It wasn't my best start, I can tell you that. I just kept picking it up each hurdle and each hurdle. Thank you. I need a Band-aid."

Arcury also came back later in the meet and won the Federation title in a season-best 14:26. Both wins were satisfying after placing second last year.

Second wasn't what Mikayla Pearce had in mind in the long jump, but the medal hanging around her neck looked good. The Maryvale junior finished second for the second year in a row. She was beaten by defending champion senior Klarissa Rick of Holy Name. Rick went 19 feet, 1.75 inches while Pearce was 18-9.25.

Pearce said with a laugh that losing to someone by slim margins in back-to-back years "gets irritating. It's kind of a mental thing as much as it is a physical thing. I've been having a crazy board [from where I take off]. That's why I fouled out of the triple yesterday."

Senior Abbie Benson of Iroquois closed out her high school career running a 4:34.44 in the 1,500 to break her own school record by an amazing 10 seconds. Benson was the Section VI recipient of the State Sportsmanship Award in a ceremony between the end of the public school meet and the beginning of the Federation meet.

She hopes to be running next spring for Penn State as a walk-on. Benson's older sister, Catie, just completed her freshman year at Penn State where she is majoring in pre-med.

"When I visited Penn State, I became obsessed with their school," Benson said. "When they said they wanted me I said, 'OK, I'm going there.' My sister's in pre-med. She's going to be some kind of doctor, and make loads of money so I can live in her house."

Benson participated in seven state track meets in her five-year career: three indoor, three outdoor and one cross country. She is the Section VI record holder in the indoor 1,000 meters.

Senior Ashley Fields of Amherst, the top seed in the Division I 200 meters, was a scratch for the final. The two-time defending champion was at the meet in street clothes to support her Section VI teammates.

Fields limped off the track after Friday's prelims in obvious pain. She said she started experiencing back pain during the race while running the turn in the 200.

"I don't like the way it's banked. It's tight," she said. "It wasn't worth hurting my back even more." Fields looks forward to her college career at Baylor University.

Junior Kala Allen of Williamsville East, the defending state public school champion in the 400, settled for sixth in the Fed final in 56.57. She also placed fifth in the Division I 200.

UB-bound Gabby Leo of Immaculata was happy with her 4:48.35, earning her sixth place in the Fed 1,500.

"You really get to test yourself and see where you stand in comparison to the top girls in different sections," Leo said. "I love ending my season this way. We had a couple girls compete and people are surprised when they see us here. You know, Immaculata. So we're really starting to make a name for ourselves."

In the same 1,500 race, junior Sarah Anstett of East Aurora ran her PR by one second, 4:53.24 for fifth place in Division II.

"I really wanted to go out fast and see if I could stay with the main pack," she said. "I knew Gabby from cross country, and I wanted to stay with her and I wanted to work together with her. She had an awesome race and I did the best I could."

Also delivering for Immaculata was junior Kaitlyn Lopez, second in the Fed triple jump at 37-1.50.

Senior Paige Wilson of Springville placed third in the Division II shot put in 38-3.75 and second in the Fed. Her Division I counterpart, Lancaster freshman McKenzie Kuehlewind, battled through illness to finish seventh in 38 feet, 75.

Junior Ashley Peterson of Allegany-Limestone was the Division II state runnerup in the high jump, her 5 foot, 4 effort just an inch behind the winner.

Junior Malayah White of Mt. St. Mary enjoyed a pair of top five finishes in the Fed. She was fourth in the 100 meters and fifth in the 200.

The Frontier 4x800 relay of Renae Sweeney, Shannon Dalton, Emily Krasinski and Rebecca Love ran the fastest time in WNY, a 9:21.78, good for eighth place in Division I.

East Aurora's 4x800 relay, eying a state title in Division II, placed second behind Bronxville, as Allyssa McLaughlin, Marta McLaughlin, Sarah Mars and Megan Hulton ran a season-best 9:23.54.

Junior Stephanie Izard of Sweet Home tied for first place in the high jump at 5-5.75 to highlight her fourth place finish in the pentathlon.

Section VI only crowned one girls state champion, but Section VI girls chairman Walt McLaughlin said that doesn't necessarily mean it was a disappointing meet.

"In our society it's either win or nothing, but that's not really not the case," he said. "Some kids had season-best performances and we're pretty proud of how the section did as a whole. We measure success by how many kids get to the podium. Always our goal is to come home with a medal [top six in Division I or II]."

mmonnin@buffnews.com