

SECTION VI CHAMPIONSHIPS

Newfane's Steel is 'multi' talented Stage set for Eaton, Golabek in throws

By Mary Jo Monnin NEWS SPORTS REPORTER
mmonnin@buffnews.com



Jenna Hulton of East Aurora is the top seed in the 800 and 1,500 for this weekend's Section VI track meet. Phot by Mark Mulville/Buffalo News



Andrew Pfeiffer of Clarence looks to run away with the 3,200 title. Photo by Robert Kirkham/Buffalo News

Before she starts living on Tulsa time, Brianna Steel of **Newfane** has some unfinished business.

With the Section VI Track and Field Championships this weekend, Steel, who has signed with the University of Tulsa, looks to make her point in the pentathlon — well over 3,000 of them.

Steel is the top seed in the Division II pentathlon with 3,149 points. She has owned the multievent, winning the sectional title every year since she was a freshman.

Steel signed early with Tulsa. Her scholarship includes 70 percent of the tuition. The Hurricanes have a distinct Buffalo flavor with Cory Pixley finishing up his freshman season and Jim Garnham as an assistant coach.

Steel said she keeps in contact with Pixley over the Internet. Like Steel, Pixley does the multievents and the jumps. He had told Steel he loves Tulsa but cautions the NCAA Division I level is very demanding.

Garnham is a second-year assistant. Prior to Tulsa, he served five years as an assistant coach at the University at Buffalo and he also coached at Depew. Steel said Garnham has been trying to build the multievent program at Tulsa, and that he's been following her career since he first saw her at the Empire State Games.

Steel has that rare combination of talent and determination. While most pentathletes dread the last event, the 800 meters, she said she loves it because it's a measure of the heart you have. She wants to win as badly as anyone, but also feels it's important to support the ones around her.

"When you get to the bigger competitions you make a lot of friends and cheer each other on. To me, that's what makes a true athlete," she said.

In her only pentathlon this season she broke the school record with 3,149 points. She said her favorite event is the high jump in which she has a personal record of 5-6.

Her other PRs are 100 hurdles (15.62), long jump (17-1), 800 (2:27) and shot put (30-10).

"I'm probably just the athlete who wants it," she said. "I don't have all that much strength and I probably have a little speed, but I like to prove myself to people."

Starpoint will showcase its 5-year-old facility as host of the championship on Friday and Saturday. The event begins both days at noon. Athletes may compete in a maximum of four events. The meet is also a qualifier for the New York State Championships the following weekend at Deitz Stadium in Kingston.

Boys Division I

Rob Golabek of **Frontier** has been waiting for the sectionals all season. Not only because it's a major meet, but it's also a chance to compete in the shot put and discus against Blake Eaton of **Allegheny- Limestone**. Golabek and Eaton are in different divisions, but he's still anxious to exchange throws with the New York State defending champion. They are the only 60-foot shot putters in Section VI history. Their only meeting this season was at the Olean Invitational. "We bring the best out of each other," said Eaton.

Eaton holds the Section VI record at 64-10 while Golabek's career-best is 60-7.5. "You love that kind of intensity," said Golabek. "Blake's a great thrower. He's a big boy [6-foot-3, 300 pounds] and that helps, but he works hard."

Don't miss the finals of the sprints which will likely feature the much-anticipated matchup between juniors Willie Burnett of **McKinley** and Anthony Johnson of **Kenmore East**. Both won the 100 and 200 at their respective league meets. Johnson is the top seed in the 100 at 10.74. They are the top two seeds in the 200.

Burnett also leads a loaded 4x100 relay along with Arvin Bell, Kevin Chillis and Justin White.

Johnson's rise has been impressive as he closes out just his second season running track. He dominated in his league winning most 100 races by at least 10 meters.

"He's just a very physically strong runner," said first-year Kenmore East coach Shane Magaris. "He's coming out a lot better. He's starting out with short, powerful strides and then getting into a nice, loose stride as he gets down the track."

It's shaping up to be quite a footrace in the 800 and 1,600 between John Haenle of **Lockport** and Aaron Foote of **Niagara-Wheatfield** as both have the top times in each event. . . . Senior Dwight Barlow of **Hutch-Tech** is the defending sectional champ in the high jump, but he'll need to PR to overtake top seed Willie Jones of **Amherst** who's at 6-6.

Boys Division II

Adding to his section record in the shot put isn't the only thing Eaton has in mind. He'd like to catch one and break Sheldon Battle of **Jamestown's** section record in the discus at 192-10. He's the top seed at 185-5.

"In practice, no doubt. It's just a matter of me doing it in a meet," said Eaton. "Every meet my goal is to PR. I'm at 64-10 in the shot. That 65 barrier is something big in my book. This whole season I've been working on my separation of hips and keeping my shoulders back. It's resulted in huge PRs."

The pole vault is Jake Evans' to lose. The senior from **Franklinville** is the top seed by a 1-foot margin. He vaulted 14 feet in the rain at the CCIAC meet. . . . **Olean** triple jumper

Demetrius Bailey has broken the school record in three consecutive meets leaving him as the top sectional seed at 45- 1.75. . . . Chris Vency of Olean, whose had a long recovery from knee surgery, won the triple last year, but he will just do the long jump and 4x100. . . .With an eye toward the state meet, Tom Ruebens of **Wilson** will run the 3,200 and not the 1,600. . . . **Dunkirk's** Zach Krebs, whose been dealing with a hamstring injury the past three weeks, earned the top seed in the 400 with a 49.84 in his league meet. . . . Junior Bob Makin of **Holland** holds the school records in both the long and triple jump.

If the ECIC meet is any indication, Melissa Kurzdorfer has patches waiting for her in the shot put and discus. The **Lancaster** freshman broke the ECIC record in the discus at 143-4 and came within 1.5 inches of the ECIC record in the shot with a 45-10.50.

Kurzdorfer has been getting consistently better this season which is bad news for her competitors.

"I just try to do my best, but it's definitely discouraging," said Melissa Schuster of **Frontier**, ECIC runner-up to Kurzdorfer in the shot put by nearly 11 feet. "She's very supportive of everybody. She helps out Frontier a lot. I watch the way she throws and watch the way she's so aggressive toward hitting her goals."

The top three seeds in the pentathlon are separated by a mere three points. Junior Amanda Campbell of **Lockport** is first at 2,486 points, sophomore Lauren Lewis of **West Seneca West** is at 2,485 and senior Ashley Mrozek of **Lancaster** is at 2,483.

West Seneca West has Jordan Givens and Emily Sullivan back from its defending sectional champion 4x800 relay. Jackie Cintron and Lindsay Kozinski round out the relay. West junior Morgan Billi is the top seed in the long and triple jumps. Junior Amanda Major looks to hit the state standard in the discus. She did a 121-7 at ECICs to break her own school record.

Girls Division II

Look for **Holland** and **East Aurora** to make frequent trips to the awards tent.

Holland's 4x100 team is undefeated. Kim Flaig, Alex Bender, Allison Connelly, Dana Cryan and Jaime Mund are the top seed at 50.28. Holland's 4x100 has gone to states the past two years. Serena Flattery, the defending sectional champ in the 400, has been nursing a sore hamstring. If she can't go in the open 400, she'll try the relay. Another interesting race should be the 4x400 as Holland has the top time at 4:09.53 and **Olean** is close behind at 4:09.94.

East Aurora's success in cross country has carried over to outdoor. The Blue Devils are the top seed in five events with a lineup featuring several runners from its state championship team.

Jenna Hulton is the top seed in the 800 and 1,500. Catherine Lusardi is the top seed in the 3,000 and second in the 1,500. The Blue Devils' 4x800 is also the favorite by an impressive 20 seconds.

It could be said sophomore Kirsten Weberg earned the top seed in the steeplechase by accident. Erin Crawford would have been there, but she broke her leg on a skateboard the week before ECICs. Weberg not only replaced her, she ran a 7:26.84 in what was the first steeple race of her life at ECICs. "That was kind of a scramble at the last minute," said coach Mary McLaughlin. "She was all excited about it. She loved [it] and said, 'I know I can faster.' "

East has *two* athletes who will contend in the 100 and 200. Freshman Shontai Moye is tied with Krissy Karlson of **Fredonia** for the top seed in the 200 at 26.14. East's Taniqua Hollingsworth, who medaled at states last year, is tied with Flaig of Holland for the second seed in the 100 at 12.74. . . . Senior Wendy Hendershot of **Salamanca**, a triple winner at sectionals last year, is the top seed in the high jump.