

## Knox, Craft leading Bears track; Both hoping States become reality

By Steven Dlugosz Times



**CORRECT FORM...John F. Kennedy senior Corey Knox, pictured here at practice Wednesday, is looking to make another run at the New York State Public High School Athletic Association championships in the shot put and discus events. (Times photo)**

For John F. Kennedy High School seniors Corey Knox and Greg Craft, this spring marks the final time both will be in uniform for a Bears athletic event. The pair are hoping to make the most of their "swan song" for Kennedy's boys track and field squad.

Knox qualified for the New York State Public High School Athletic Association championships in 2006 in the shot put and discus events. Craft contributed a state-qualifying mark in the pole vault but did not participate, as he was edged out by top pole vaulters in Erie County Interscholastic Conference-I and II.

Bears head coach Pete Szymanski said he expects Knox and Craft to make another run at states this spring.

"They're the team leaders," Szymanski said of the pair. "I feel pretty good about them reaching their goals."

Knox, who recently qualified for the Penn Relays, an event taking place April 26-28 that includes elite runners primarily from East Coast schools, said this spring is his "time to shine."

"The Penn Relays are a great showcase," said Knox, who added that he has talked to track coaches from Syracuse and Penn State universities about possibly joining a team in the fall.

"I definitely want to go back to states. If I do, I won't be as nervous as I was last year, when tons of people were watching."

Craft, who is looking at possibly attending Brockport State or Fredonia State for track, said he needs to stay hungry and not get overconfident to be successful.

"I can't get a big head and just say I got states on a lock," Craft told the *Times*. "The key is maintaining your focus."

JFK, which finished 2-2 in ECICV after ECIC expanded to five divisions a year ago, returns other talented runners, including sophomores Andy Wrazen (hurdles) and Josh Klyczek (sprinter) and juniors Jake Gasiorek (pole vaulter, miler) and Mike Bartoszek (hurdles).

Juniors Jeff Lelonek and Steve Blenker and eighth grader Nathan Odrobina are athletes Szymanski stated would likely lead the one- and two-mile squads. Junior Travis Johns (triple and long jump) and sophomore Derek Krzemian (thrower) will also see a lot of time on the field this season.



**RUNNING INTENSITY...John F. Kennedy senior track star Jessica Campas prepares to sprint Wednesday morning at the JFK track. The Bears will host the Early Bird Invitational Saturday, beginning at 9 a.m. (Times photo)**

The rest of the team, Symanski said, is very young.

"We're hoping the young guys can step up to the plate and produce," said the Bears coach. "They'll see a lot of time before the season comes to an end."

Szymanski added that JFK's cross-town rival will again provide stiff competition in ECIC-V.

"Cleveland Hill is clearly the team to beat in the division," Szymanski said. "They and Holland should go at it again this year at the top."

JFK hosts the Early Bird Invitational Saturday at 9 a.m.

### **Sweeney hopes strong core speeds Flyers' rebuilding**

The Maryvale boys track and field team is hoping to take bigger steps forward this season after making smaller strides a year ago. With a strong returning core of talent, Flyers head coach Todd Sweeney believes a winning campaign is possible.

Maryvale's main nucleus is comprised of seniors John Rutherford (sprinter, pentathlon candidate), Mark Rohloff (400-meter hurdler), Will Tierney (sprinter) and Steve Sacco (sprinter). Juniors Marty Kretz (sprinter), Andy Reidy (middle distance), Dave Christopher (thrower) and Aaron Ryan (pole vaulter, jumper) will also be key elements on the Flyers' squad, according to Sweeney.



Sweeney, who is entering his second year as head coach, said Christopher and Ryan have solid chances at reaching the Section VI championship.

"We've got a pretty young team with a lot of freshmen and sophomores, so we'll be looking for guys to emerge as the season goes along," said Sweeney, whose squad went 2- 3 in league competition a year ago. "The key is that we have a strong core back this year, so it's positive."

The Flyers open their season April 17 at local foe Depew, with meet time scheduled for 4:30 p.m.