

UP AND OVER EXPECTATIONS



BILL POEHLER/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Kennedy's Bishop Mitchell competes in the pole vault at the Tri-River Conference district track and field meet on Thursday.

Kennedy's Bishop Mitchell excels in track, prepares for state meet

BILL POEHLER
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Bishop Mitchell ended the competition as soon as he begun.

The Kennedy High School junior set a personal record in the long jump with his first jump of the competition at the Tri-River Conference district track and field meet at Salem Academy on Thursday at 21 feet, 9 inches.

Not only was it good enough to win, but it was good enough that he chose not

to jump again and save himself.

"It was a first," Mitchell said of his jump. "I adjusted my length a little bit and I guess it was just the right pop and the right jump."

He had much more competition in the pole vault.

Mitchell's leap of 12-7 was a personal record, but placed him second behind Central Linn's Eric Blanchard. The competition between those two and Regis' Connor West was strong.

"They're great vaulters," Mitchell

said. "We push each other, actually. It was, a we all got to get to state or it's nothing really. We've been together in the league a long time, especially me and Eric, we've been working on competing with each other and pushing each other."

Despite Mitchell's many athletic accomplishments — he was a first-team Class 2A all-state selection on both sides of the ball in the fall — he has only competed in the state track and field meet one time, that coming in his fresh-

man year.

He qualified for the state meet last year, but a hamstring injury forced him out of the state meet.

Mitchell is showing he's as close to 100 percent as possible this year and is anxious to compete in the May 19-20 meet at Hayward Field.

"I feel more focused, coming off of that last year," Mitchell said. "Made me learn my lessons in what to do, get more healthy, stretch out more. Peaking at the right time and I want to get better."



Kennedy's Adrian Parra (middle) runs in the 3,000m.



St. Paul's Jennifer Hernandez competes in the long jump district meet on Thursday.

Sports awards invite top area athletes for honors

PETE MARTINI
STATESMAN JOURNAL

The Mid-Valley Sports Awards event was created to honor high school athletic success in the Salem area.

As most students and parents know, high school sports are a big part of life in the Mid-Valley.

According to the latest statistics from the OSAA, the 36 high schools in the Mid-Valley have 14,023 student-athletes. That figure counts multi-sport athletes for each sport they play, but even still, to be among the 89 invitees to the awards show puts you in elite status among your peers.

"I was shocked," said Cascade sophomore Halle Wright, who is a finalist for

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SPORTS AWARDS

Girls Basketball Player of the Year. "I don't even know what to say about it. It was just shocking."

The Mid-Valley Sports Awards are set for 6 p.m. June 7 at the Salem Convention Center, and it will feature NFL Hall of Fame wide receiver Jerry Rice.

All of the Statesman Journal Athlete of the Week winners during the school year, as well as all of the award finalists, will receive complimentary tickets to

the event.

Like many of the athletes who will attend the event, Wright competes in multiple sports — soccer, basketball and track and field.

"I heard growing up that being a multi-sport athlete will help you," Wright said. "I'm trying to pursue basketball, that's one of the things I want to go big in. They always said just trying different sports to see how you like it, so I ended up playing three sports."

According to the OSAA, the schools in the Mid-Valley with the most athletes are West Salem (1,146), Sprague (1,082) and South Salem (955).

But the Salem area includes far more than just the six Salem-Keizer high schools. There are more than 8,000 ath-

letes in the Mid-Valley who compete for the other 30 schools.

The 36 high schools in the Mid-Valley have a combined 482 sports programs, and the Mid-Valley Sports Awards Show will be the first time that the top athletes in the Salem area will come together under one roof on one night.

Although she doesn't know much about Rice, Wright said she is excited for the opportunity to meet the three-time Super Bowl winner.

"Hearing how big he is, I can't wait just to go meet him and see what he has to say," Wright said. "And get some advice on what we have to do in our futures."

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