

Outlaws shine at Sweet Home track Meet of Champions

By **Charlie Kanzig**
Correspondent

The annual Meet of Champions, held at Sweet Home High School on Saturday, April 27, featured an array of Outlaws standing high on the podium following season-best performances.

The meet, which in recent years has been staged at Willamette University, took place at Sweet Home this year due to scheduling challenges. Due to the state meet being held a week earlier than normal, meet calendars for the 2019 season have been complicated for many schools since traditional dates for annual meets got jammed up, including the Sisters Rotary Invitational which was originally scheduled for this same date, but had to be cancelled because of scheduling conflicts.

The calendar issues and site change definitely affected the number of teams represented at the meet. The Meet of Champions typically showcases many of the top 4A athletes in Oregon, but of the 30-plus teams represented, only nine came from the 4A ranks. Nonetheless, every event featured strong competition, leading to a plethora of season-best marks for the Outlaws.

Field events started off the meet and the Outlaws got things going right away. Horizontal jumpers Garrett Kersavage and Ben Johnson each established personal bests as Kersavage hopped, skipped and jumped 41 feet 8.75 inches in the triple jump for third place while Johnson took second place in the long jump with a mark of 20 feet 7.75 inches.

Skyler Larson also had a good jumping day, clearing 6 feet 1 inch in the high jump for second place. The winner, Cesar Sepulveda of 2A

Jefferson, soared 6 feet 9.25 inches.

Girls jumpers also performed well as Anya Shockley established a lifetime best for fifth place in the triple jump (32 feet 11 inches) and Samantha Silva leapt 16 feet 2.75 inches for second place in the long jump, also a personal best.

Freshman Lexie Miller cleared 4 feet 10 inches for the first time on the way to third place. Fellow frosh Hollie Lewis cleared the same height with more misses and finished fourth.

It was a tough day for pole-vaulters as the winner cleared only 9 feet, leaving Shelby Larson in second place with a clearance of 8 feet 8 inches.

The Outlaws hit the podium in an array of events once the running events began. The 4x100-meter boys team of Hayden Sharp, Ben Johnson, Korbin Sharp and Brodey Anderson brought home the gold in a time of 44.15.

Johnson proved he is a legitimate force in the 100 meter winning in a near-best time of 11.39, just a lean .04 seconds ahead of the runner-up. Anderson placed fifth in the race at 11.62, but came back with a stellar win in the 400, establishing a personal record of 51.59. Like Johnson, he won by a hair, just .03 ahead of Sweet Home's Casey Tow. Anderson's time ranks first among 4A runners so far this season.

Additionally, Hayden Sharp placed fourth in the race with a season-best of 52.62.

The sprinting corps rounded out the meet with second-place finish in the 4x400 meter relay with the foursome of Sharp, Sharp, Anderson, and Skyler Larson clocking 3:38.79.

"Our sprinters sure brought their best today," said

Head Coach Jeff Larson.

The distance runners did their part for the boys team as well. After setting a personal best in the 1,500 and placing third with a time of 4:24.4, John Peckham came back with a win in the 3,000 meters with his buddy Will Thorsett in tow, as the pair went 1-2 in 9:20.13 and 9:27.92 respectively. For Thorsett, the time cut nearly 15 seconds off of his previous best.

"I'm very proud of those two," said Assistant Coach Josh Nordell. "That double by John is pretty dang impressive for a sophomore."

Skyler Larson shaved a bit off of his personal best in the 110-meter hurdles (16.42) for fifth place and placed seventh in the 300 hurdles with a time of 44.16.

For the girls, Kate Bowen led the way with a win in the 3,000 (11:17.04) and a second-place finish in the 1,500

(4:59.99), both season bests.

Freshman Emma Singleton took the runner-up spot to Hannah Hernandez of Philomath in the 800 meters with a time of 2:31.29.

Sarah Thorsett, another assistant coach for the team said of the distance crew, "Kate, John, Will and Emma all raced with so much confidence today," she said. "Each made bold moves in their respective races and never looked back. I think they all had fun today."

"We were missing some of our girls for this meet, but we are continuing to improve and I like how the girls are competing."

Larson felt quite pleased at the end of the day. "It was a very good day for Outlaw track and field. The kids are beginning to see what is possible and are excited to find out how the season will turn out."

The Outlaws will take part in another quality competition this week with the Wally Ciochetti Invitational, a twilight meet, hosted by Cottage Grove High School on Friday, May 3. The 14-team meet includes nine 4A schools and is a great preparation for the upcoming District Meet, according to Larson.

"Cottage Grove always serves up a well-run meet and the kids get a kick out of running under the lights," he said.