

SPORTS

Girls team competition comes down to final, pressure-packed race – the 4x400-meter relay

By Joe Petshow
For the Columbia Gorge News

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fifth in a series of stories about Gorge all-time track and field bests. Track and field, because of its relatively standard distances, allows for somewhat of a level playing field when comparing athletes from different eras - giving rise to the possibility of a virtual meet. Each school was allowed three entrants in individual events and one relay. The series has been published continuously since Dec. 15, 2020.)

PERHAPS IT WAS FITTING that the girls 2020 Gorge Virtual Track & Field meet came to an end under soon-to-be burning stadium lights, everything on the line with one event remaining.

To recap, the once-in-a-lifetime meet featured an eclectic bit of everything – national-caliber performances, bellbottom jeans and a visit from law enforcement - before it was mysteriously cancelled. As it turns out, a simple misunderstanding led coaches to call off the competition after 11 of 17 events. The meet resumed, almost as abruptly.

The athletes, who had talked their bus drivers into stopping for food before heading back to their respective schools, were not too far away. Fueled on Pietro's pizza – as well as other local fare – the athletes returned to the Hood River Valley High School track after a 90-minute break to finish the competition under the glow of the Henderson Stadium lights. Honorary starter Jim Puckett was heading east on Interstate 84 when he was intercepted by state trooper Swede Pearson, who told the “Cove Comet” the meet was back on. Pearson later stopped by HRVHS to volunteer with the field events.

(Before the meet resumed, the small cadre of sportswriters covering the event was reportedly briefed by Oregon School Activities Association officials, who apparently ascended on the track from various points, including Wilsonville and Dufur. According to news accounts, there was concern that the meet was being held out of season - a violation of WIAA and OSAA rules. Once the situation was cleared up - and after local school officials successfully argued the meet did not qualify as a foundation event - the OSAA brass signed off on the matter. What's more, two OSAA representatives graciously stuck around to serve as turn judges.)

Athletes were allowed extra time to warm up (and in some cases, digest their food) and the meet's interruption did not diminish performances. Distance runner Lauren Lloyd, the 2010 Class 6A 800-meter state champion, set the tone for the evening with a dominating performance in her specialty. Lloyd (2:10.95 best in 2010) won by six seconds over Mandi Fitz-Gustafson, whose decision to run the race instead of the 3000 helped The Dalles keep close to Hood River in the team competition. The Eagles made it two straight wins, when Jestena Mattson won her third event, the 200, a short time later. The half-lap race featured seven sprinters under 26 seconds and enabled HRV to extend its lead by eight more points over The Dalles with four events remaining, 177-159.5.

The Riverhawks responded like champions, winning the next two events: the discus and 300-meter low hurdles. Neticia Enesi threw 147-6 to win the discus by eight inches over Bickelton's future collegiate national champion, Annie Hess. Carrie North won an amazing, photo-finish hurdles race in which the top three finishers were separated by less than a tenth of a second. North won at 44.82, Cameo



The Dalles Senior Maria North leans across the finish line to three-peat in the 400-meter relay Saturday at the OSAA Class 3A state track and field championships in 2004. The Dalles Chronicle/Jodi Nofziger photo/file

Davis of HRV and Amanda Stump of Stevenson tied for second at 44.9. (Meet officials were relieved that the electronic timing system didn't malfunction, as the woman who took the Polaroid print to confirm the winner of the boys high hurdles, didn't get the message the meet had resumed and was nowhere to be found.)

Twenty-two points - scored by Enesi, whose competitive track and field career ended after high school when she decided to pursue volleyball at the University of Oregon, North and Chris Viltz (seventh, discus) - pulled the Riverhawks within 189-181.5 of Hood River with the triple jump and long relay remaining.

A mini controversy (which should not come as too much of a surprise) delayed the certification of the triple jump results. It centered around multi-event phenom Jill Pimley, the five-time state champion, who once again competed for both Klickitat (eighth grade, freshman, sophomore) and Goldendale (junior, senior). Her performance(s) potentially had a huge bearing on the outcome of the team competition. It was asserted that Pimley had an unfair advantage because she was able to have twice as many attempts as her fellow competitors. Pimley, who walked on to play Division I basketball at University of Washington for four years, was oblivious to the spat. Instead, she was winning an impromptu three-point shooting competition on the rim outside HRV's gymnasium. Once summoned back to the event, she quickly took things into her own hands to settle the sometimes-heated dispute. Pimley went 1-2 with just two jumps; her first attempt for Klickitat was 37-8.75 and her second for Goldendale measured 38-6.25.

More important, as far as the team competition was concerned, Sharon Engles (class of 1998) and Caitlin Anghilante (2000) finished fourth and eighth in the triple jump giving The Dalles six more team points. That pulled the Riverhawks within 189-187.5 as runners started to warm up for the 4x400 relay.

With so much at stake in the relay, a groundswell began among coaches, who argued they should be able to hand pick team members from their all-time 400 lists. This bickering went on for a few minutes - enabling public address announcer Keith Bassham to



Neticia Enesi prepares to compete at the OSAA Class 3A state track and field championships in 2004. The Dalles Chronicle photo/file

declare snack shack items “half priced”. Eventually, calmer – and younger - heads prevailed. Athletes from both HRV and The Dalles suggested that if the coaches didn't stop arguing, they would have to compete in the relay themselves. The matter was quickly dropped and coaches, clipboards in hand, sauntered off – much relieved - to hand out batons for the winner-take-all relay.

The 4x400 was as spectacular as advertised. The Dalles, Hood River and Stevenson separated themselves early from the rest of the field, as runners from each team held the lead at least once during the four-lap sprint. The Dalles, whose team included Laura North, Carrie North, Fitz-Gustafson and Maria North, would not be denied. The same team that in 2004 had won the final race at the Class 3A state meet at historic Hayward Field to win the state championship, clinched the virtual meet by a half point - 197.5-197 - with a time of 3:59.48.

Almost simultaneously, as the last relay runner – in Lane 8 from Horizon Christian - crossed the

finish line, the beautiful Gorge weather finally broke. A strong east wind gust snapped a fir branch which sailed as far as a Sebastian Barajas discus, clipping the light pole by the javelin runway. The collision shorted out the lights, causing sparks to shoot out in all directions, and knocked sportscaster Mark Bailey's live radio broadcast off the air. Nobody was injured, and Bassham, right on cue, played the theme song from “The Natural” over the PA system.

Some athletes – Mattson, Pimley, MaryAnn Graves, Heidi Shultz among them – were already gathering near the Eagle by the main entrance to the track to secretly plan a heptathlon next month in Maupin.

(Next issue: Day three of the 2020 boys virtual meet. Thanks again to the many Gorge track and field coaches who helped compile entrants. Apologies in advance to any athlete who was overlooked. Readers are invited (and encouraged) to send in corrections, all-time best additions, and comments to joepshow@aol.com.)

TRACK & FIELD FOCUS

Way (two) good for just one sport

Most high school athletes will never play college sports, but a few - very select - athletes have to decide which sport they want to play.

Jill Pimley rewrote Washington track and field record books during her prep track and field career at Klickitat and Goldendale. She won five state triple jump titles and three more in the long jump. That attracted the attention of University of Washington, which offered her a track and field scholarship. Pimley attended the Seattle school, but decided to pursue basketball instead as a Husky.

Pimley, a 5-foot-6 guard, who scored 1,950 points in high school from 1994 to 1997, walked on to the UW team and eventually worked her way to captain her junior and senior years. Pimley was a four-year letterwinner from 1998 to 2001. Her work ethic earned her most improved honors, team defensive player of the year honors, and the Husky Coaches' Award (twice). She also was a two-time Pac-10 All-Academic selection.

Neticia Enesi (now Fanene) of The Dalles was a part of a couple of historic track and field teams at her school. She was the state 6A discus champion and third in the shot put her senior year in 2006, when The Dalles finished third in the team race. As a junior she was second in the discus and sixth in the shot at state. She finished sixth at state in the discus as a sophomore, part of a Riverhawk team that won its second successive state championship.

The 6-foot-1 middle blocker excelled on the volleyball court, as well, enough so that the University of Oregon signed her to play for the Ducks. She started 27 matches as a freshman and was named an honorable mention on the Pac-10 All-Freshman team. Enesi, a one-time outstanding age-group swimmer, kept getting better; she was selected to two All-American teams and set school records for hitting percentage and block assists. The two-time All-Pac-10 first team member is among the top-10 all-time for Oregon in numerous categories, including first in single season hitting percentage and second in blocks.

About the time Enesi was finishing her college career, Andrea Bailey was beginning hers — as a member of the St. Mary's basketball team in Moraga, CA. The 6-foot guard has the second-best time in the 200 meters in Gorge history (25.2 seconds in 2006), but it was on the basketball court where she really hit her stride. She played four years for the Gaels, before an injury cut short her senior season.

Earlier in the 2020 school year, Hood River senior Henry Buckles signed to play football at Oregon State University. Buckles, along with other Gorge shot put and discus state champions before him, will continue his athletic career on the football field. That club includes James Atoe from The Dalles, who played four years at University of Washington and played professionally most recently for the Washington Valor of the Arena Football League.



Neticia (Enesi) Fanene



Henry Buckles



James Atoe

VIRTUAL MEET 2000 GIRLS FINAL DAY RESULTS

Virtual Meet Rules: Individuals can complete in four events including relays; two of three distance events; one relay per school; three entrants per school in each event.

Final Girls Team Scores (10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 scoring): The Dalles 197.5, Hood River 197, Columbia 76.6, Goldendale 56.5, Stevenson 53.4, Klickitat 20.5, Corbett 20, Lyle 13, Trout Lake 12, Bickelton 8, Dufur 5, Glenwood 2.5, Horizon 0, Wahtonka 0.

Discus
Neticia Enesi TD 2006 147-6
Annie Hess Bick. 2005 146-10
Diane Bedell Stev. 1982 139-4
Taylor Darden Dufur 2015 130-0
Candy Newman Col. 1987 129-8
Tiana Watson Gold. 2019 128-7
Chris Viltz TD 1981 128-6
Stacia Bell Col. 2016 127-8
Crystal Franklin TD 1993 127-2

Triple Jump
Jill Pimley Gold. 1996 38-6.25
Heidi Shultz Col. 1993 37-8.75
Kristin Janney Col. 2002 37-0.75
Sharon Engles TD 1998 36-3.75
Stacey Brewer Klick. 1998 36-3
Madison McCrum Stev. 2015 36-0
Kaitlyn Richards Stev. 2006 35-8
Caitlin Anghilante TD 2000 35-6.25
Katie Conklin TD 2015 35-5.25

200 Meters
Jestena Mattson HRV 2015 24.51
Heidi Shultz Col. 1993 25.2
Andrea Bailey TD 2006 25.24c
Maria North TD 2003 25.28
Amanda Stump Stev. 2008 25.3
Elaine Hess HRV 1993 25.51
Ocean Kuykendall HRV 1994 25.74c
Elisabeth Krieger Corb. 2015 26.12
Hannah Polkinghorn Col. 2019 26.43

300 Meter Hurdles
Carrie North TD 2005 44.82
Cameo Davis HRV 1997 44.90
Amanda Stump Stev. 2008 44.9
Emily Thompson HRV 2012 45.14
Jill Pimley Klick. 1995 45.3
Kali AnDyke, Corb. 2015 45.81
Allison Gilliam Gold. 2018 45.94
Janet Steindorf Gold. 1994 46.77
Andrea North TD 2011 46.83

800 Meters
Lauren Lloyd HRV 2010 2:10.95
Mandi Fitz-Gustafson TD 2001 2:16.95
Ellie Rising Gold. 2019 2:18.38
Neola Putnam TLake 2006 2:18.45
Alison Flaming HRV 2010 2:19.79
Emma Mullins TD 2019 2:19.85
Emily Viuhkola HRV 2015 2:20.01
Heather Fitz-Gustafson TD 2001 2:20.05
Holly Nielsen TLake 1989 2:20.7

4x400 Meter Relay
The Dalles 2004 (Laura North, Carrie North, Heather Fitz-Gustafson, Maria North) 3:59.48
Hood River Valley (Rita Cousins, Dresden Merz, Cameo Davis, Jennifer Hedges) 1998 4:03.87
Stevenson (Amanda Stump, Kaitlyn Richards, Kate Jaco, Rylee Walker) 2006 4:04.98
Corbett (Jenna Kerslake, Kali AnDyke, Sascha Fruehauf, Elisabeth Krieger) 2015 4:07.93
Columbia (Abigail Zuck, Kristen Janney, Alexa Williams, Jeni Stembridge) 2003 4:09.8
Trout Lake (Neola Putnam, Anna Schmid, Emily Paxson, Liz Vogt) 2009 4:12.01
Goldendale (Lene Riggers, Abby Hedges, Ellie Rising, Allison Gilliam) 2018 4:18.22
Lyle (Jesika Cochenour, Brittany Price, Lisa Donath, Taeera Churchwell) 2009 4:29.6h
Horizon Christian (Kaitlin Wenz, Augustina Decker, Grace Schreiber, Valerie Bruggeman) 2019 4:31.12