

DALLAS TRACK AND FIELD

Tallon, Webb go 1-2 in 100-meter hurdles

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-ObsERVER

INDEPENDENCE — Dallas juniors Stefani Tallon and Jenifer Webb entered the finals of the girls 100-meter hurdles with a singular goal in mind at the Mid-Willamette Conference district meet. They didn't want just one of them to make state. They wanted both automatic bids to state this Friday and Saturday in Eugene.

"Jenifer and I looked at each other and said it would be so fun if we could take one and two," Tallon said.

The duo did just that. Tallon won the race in 16.55 seconds with Webb hot on her heels in second in 16.59 seconds.

"I heard people hitting hurdles," Tallon said. "I just wanted to have a clean race. I was so excited at the finish. I turned around and asked if (Jenifer) took second. She told me I think so."

Webb and Tallon have been training partners throughout the season and have helped each other reach new levels of success.

"We challenge each other from the first hurdle to the second, from the starting block and throughout the whole race," Webb said. "Every little bit we're pushing each other farther."

While each had their sights set on qualify-

**CLASS 5A
TRACK AND FIELD
STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Dallas qualifiers: BOYS — Jacob Deming, jr., pole vault (seeded 10th); Aaron White, jr., triple jump (seeded 14th); Trevor Cross, fr., 3,000-meter run (seeded 11th); 4 x 100 relay (Jacob Deming, jr., Cody Webb, jr., Aaron White, jr., Justin Huxel, sr., seeded ninth)

GIRLS — Stefani Tallon, jr., 100 hurdles (seeded eighth); Jenifer Webb, jr., 100 hurdles (seeded ninth); Naomi Howe, sr., 300 hurdles (seeded seventh); Kyleen Benz, sr., shot put (seeded 10th) and discus (seeded eighth).

ing for state, they also had a secondary interest. Each wanted the other to grab the final spot to state.

"We worked so hard together," Webb said. "I'm so happy we get to go to state and enjoy this together."

Dallas also saw state qualifiers in seven other events during the district meet.

Jacob Deming won the boys pole vault with a mark of 12 feet, 9 inches. He was also part of the boys 4 x 100 relay team



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Dallas junior Stefani Tallon, center, clears a hurdle during the 100-meter hurdles race.

along with Cody Webb, Aaron White and Justin Huxel that took second, finishing .01 seconds ahead of Central for third.

Naomi Howe finished second in the 300 hurdles (46.82 seconds); Kyleen Benz placed

second in the shot put (35 feet, 9 inches) and discus (111-11); Trevor Cross took second in the boys 3,000 (9:20.50); and White finished second in the triple jump (41-11 ¼) to clinch their spots at state, as well.

Boys relay hangs on to second in wild finish at meet

By Lukas Eggen
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INDEPENDENCE — Entering the Mid-Willamette Conference district meet, Dallas' boys 4 x 100-meter relay team of Jacob Deming, Cody Webb, Aaron White and Justin Huxel was ranked first in the league.

But the saying goes anything can happen, and the Dragons found themselves locked in the closest finish of the meet.

The tension began before the race.

"I knew Lebanon had switched their team with John Bates, their all-star, running second," Deming said. "I didn't know they had also changed their first leg."

Lebanon's new leadoff leg was Raymond Knuth.

"That made me a little nervous but I thought we just need to reply on all those practices we've had," Deming said.

As the starting gun went



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-ObsERVER

Dallas sprinter Justin Huxel, center, attempts to finish strong in the boys 4 x 100-meter relay on Thursday.

off, Deming sprinted out.

The first exchange to Cody Webb went off without any major issue.

"I started a little slow, but by the time I got to Aaron, I thought I had made up for it," Webb said.

The exchange from Webb to White also went smoothly. And it appeared the Dragons

had the lead entering the final leg of the relay, Webb said.

The final exchange between White and Webb proved problematic.

The relay team practices handoffs every day after warmups. But, on this day, the usually automatic motion set off an adventurous

and thrilling finish.

"I'm standing there and I see Aaron coming up," Huxel said. "I knew I took off too early. I freaked out a little bit and I looked back."

Deming, watching from the other side of the track, knew that was a bad sign.

"I see Huxel turn his face and I thought, 'oh no, that's not good,'" Deming said.

As runners sprinted toward the finish, it wasn't Dallas racing out in first.

"I lost sight of them for a second," Webb said. "Then I see Lebanon shooting out."

The Warriors grabbed the lead, but Huxel knew the Dragons still held second place.

"I'm thinking as long as no one passes me, we're fine," Huxel said.

It was around that time Huxel's leg began to hurt. And Central's Nick Burgett was gaining quickly.

"From the corner of my eye, I see the Central guy coming up," Huxel said. "I'm

thinking, 'oh crap.'"

As Huxel tried desperately to hang on to second, his teammates were left hoping for the best.

"I saw the Central guy closing in," Webb said. "All I could think, was no, no, no. I couldn't tell how they finished."

White was the only one unable to see just how close the finish would be.

"It was kind of hard since I'm behind everyone, everyone looks basically straight to me," White said, smiling.

Huxel and Burgett crossed the finish in a tight finish — too close to call in fact.

Neither team knew which one took second — and gained an automatic berth to state in the process, but the Dragons did have one piece of evidence to examine — a video of the finish shot by Deming's father.

"My dad showed me a video of the finish and it shows Central leaning a little farther than Huxel," Deming

said. "All we could do is wait and pray."

Dallas wasn't hopeful about the final results.

"I totally thought we took third," Webb said. "I was upset, but I was hoping we could still make it as a wild card."

But as the team made its way to the awards podium, they happened to glance down at the results sheets. There they saw shocking news: Dallas finished in 43.96 seconds — one hundredth of a second before Central. The celebration was on.

"It was the most exhilarating adrenaline rush ever," Deming said.

Despite the handoff issues, Dallas' squad set a new personal record and the Dragons are excited to finish what they've started.

"It means a lot," Webb said. "We've been working hard toward this. We've been consistently ranked at the top. We want to go there and hopefully do well."

Dream: Mom inspires daughter to find positives throughout life

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That moment was just one of several for the Panthers.

Sophomore Bethanie Altamirano always thought this moment would come. Since running a 300-meter race in middle school, she circled the 400 as her race once she got to high school.

"My goal was to go to state and I remember telling myself I was going to break 60 seconds in the 400 before I graduated," Altamirano said.

She achieved both of those goals in a single race becoming district champion in the 400, finishing in 59.61 seconds. "I ran to my mom and started crying," Altamirano said.

Her mom has been more than a constant supporter, she's been Altamirano's inspiration and helped change her entire outlook on life.

As a freshman, Altamirano was excited to start chasing her goals on the track. But that spring, she received some difficult news. Her mother, who had been battling kidney problems, saw her condition worsen.

"She told me during track season that she needed a kidney transplant," Altamirano said.

Track faded into the background. Her goals disappeared and although she finished the season, her heart wasn't truly in it.

"I wasn't ready to go to state last year," Altamirano said. "I didn't believe in myself. I was just out of it."

That began to change. Although her mom has had ups and downs, Altamirano learned to find the joy in each moment.

"I started praying more," Altamirano said. "She's been in the hospital so many times, but she's doing OK right now. I've learned to find the positives instead of the negatives. Last year, all I found were the negatives and that just brought me down. This year, I just keep the positive and keep going forward."

That new attitude helped Altamirano become a district champion.

"I felt relief and happiness," she said. "I think about Steve Prefontaine's quote, 'To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice a gift.' I thought I need to go faster. I believe that God can help me do this."

Altamirano was also part of the girls 4 x 100 relay team of Elizabeth Chavez, Alex Alvarez and Reba Hoffman that took first.

They'll be joined at state by the boys 4 x 400 relay team of Isaac Burgett, Joshua Peterson, Juan Rivera and Nick Burgett, which placed second in 3 minutes, 28.52 seconds; Isaac Burgett, who finished second in the 400 in 50.56 seconds; Samuel Cole, who took second in the shot put with a throw of 48 feet, 9 inches; and Peter Mason, who finished second in the long jump with a leap of 20 feet, 9 ¼ inches.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-ObsERVER

Central sophomore Bethanie Altamirano won the girls 400-meter run on Thursday afternoon.

"It means the world to go to state," Mason said. "My sister went to state when she was in high school in track. Our jumping coach has always sent someone to state in long jump or triple jump. This means a lot."

Josh Dickson (300 hurdles), Kylee Miller (javelin), the boys 4 x 100 relay team of Casey Brown, Isaiah Abraham, Jaxon Hutchinson and Nick Burgett and Reba Hoffman (triple jump) earned wild card berths to state.

The 5A state meet begins Friday at Hayward Field in Eugene.

"(We need to) stay humble," Hutchinson said. "There are some great athletes going there. It will be fun to see the competition."

WESTERN OREGON ROUNDUP

Men's track takes third at GNAC

Sultessa wins the men's 800

Itemizer-ObsERVER staff report

MONMOUTH — Western Oregon's men's track and field team placed third at the Great Northwest Athletic Conference Outdoor Track and Field Championships on Friday and Saturday.

The men's 4 x 100-meter relay team of Wesley Gray, Devon Woods, Aaron Whitaker and Cody Warner took first in 42.02 seconds. David Ribich won the 1,500 in 3:54.18; and Badane Sultessa took first in the 800 in 1:54.

The women finished 11th in the team standings.

Emmi Collier repeated as conference champion in the shot put, winning with a throw of 45 feet, 4 inches.

BASEBALL FALLS IN TOURNAMENT TITLE GAME: Western Oregon's baseball team's bid for a conference title fell short as the Wolves lost to Northwest Nazarene 9-8 on Friday afternoon in the GNAC baseball championship.

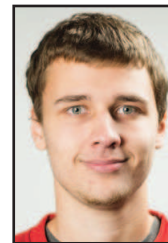
The Wolves opened the tournament with a 10-2 loss to Montana State, Billings and a 14-3 win over Northwest Nazarene on Thursday in round-robin play. WOU defeated MSUB 18-1 in its first game on Friday, highlighted by Trevor Podratz's four hits and four RBIs.

Nathan Etheridge added a three-run home run. The victory set up a winner-take-all game against Northwest Nazarene.

WOU built a 6-3 lead entering the sixth inning, but the Crusaders scored six runs in the bottom of the seventh to regain the lead for good. Western Oregon ended the season with a 33-23 record.



Sultessa



Warner



Collier



Ribich



Podratz



Etheridge