

Athletes conclude season as state-meet medalists

With fine performances by all, four Farmington athletes ended outstanding prep careers and another showed signs of future greatness Saturday in the state track and field finals.

Seniors Melissa Gratz, John Lowry, Mahogany Fletcher and Jason Sharp, as well as sophomore Derek Laszkowski, finished among the top eight in their respective events at Bay City Western High School.

North Farmington's Gratz had the highest finish of all, taking second place in the Class A girls discus, and she also was fifth in the shot put.

Gratz, who was fifth in the discus the last two years, was lending the field after making her

TRACK

best throw (131-3) on her first attempt.

But defending state champion Meso Roberts of Holt unceremoniously took over the event and eventually won the event with that distance.

Gratz, who qualified in the shot put but failed to place, had her best effort of the season with a throw of 38-1 3/4 and finished in fifth place.

"She performed a lot better in the shot put than we anticipated," North coach Bill Pinnell said, adding Gratz' performance in that event gave her a lot of confidence going into the discus.

"She wasn't disappointed about being beaten by the other girl (in the discus), (Roberts) was the state champion last year, so we knew she was capable of unleashing one and that's what she did."

"Melissa's goal in the discus was to get in the top three. We figured she would score in the shot put but would be around by the eighth or ninth. She had a great day and it was a great way to finish her career at North."

Farmington's John Lowry made his second straight appearance in the state meet and placed third in the high jump by matching his best effort of 6-6.

Lowry finished ahead of Rochester rival Jacob Surber, his future teammate and roommate at the University of Michigan, Dearborn's Jason Herrick and Grand Rapids Northview's Kyle Mahan based on fewer misses.

"John was ninth last year and missed getting a medal by one place, so his goal this year was to get a place," coach Chip Bridges said. "Since the beginning of the year, we talked about winning as a possibility, but placing was our top priority."

"Going in, if he went 6-6, that would get the job done. When he knew 6-5 without any misses, we knew he had a place. It was just

a question of how high? Lowry had struggled to overcome an injured left foot and ankle all season, according to Bridges, and still managed to have a lot of success.

"The last month of the season, he wasn't able to practice much," Bridges said, adding Lowry had only one solid practice in the week prior to the state meet.

Lowry qualified for state despite jumping only 6-1 in the regional, and his best jump in the Oakland County meet May 22 was 6-2.

"John was very fortunate to qualify," Bridges said. "I told him he could look at it one of two ways. He could say 'Nothing is going well; I'm not jumping well,' or he could say 'Thank God, I made it; I've got a second chance.'"

"It was a great way for John to finish, and he's pretty excited about getting his name on the Wall of Fame at school. He's looking forward to continuing his career and seeing just how far he can take it."

Farmington Harrison's Fletcher was fifth in the girls 100-meter dash and helped the Hawks finish eighth in the 400 relay.

Fletcher ran the 100 in 12.24 and combined with Cierra Col-

bert, Temien Clayton and Lian Reardon for a season-best time of 50.38 in the relay.

"We saw she was seeded around 12th, so she had to beat some good people to move up," Harrison coach Mark Babcock said. "She ended up in the finals and did exactly that."

"The last couple weeks she came on and had the kind of season sprinters would like to have, when they're running really, really well in the biggest races at the end."

The 400 relay team wasn't seeded in the top eight, either, and had to do the same despite running in one of the slower heats.

"We knew we'd have to run pretty darn good to get into medals and we did that," Babcock said.

As with Devon Kennedy a year ago, Babcock is sorry to see an athlete of Fletcher's ability depart the scene.

"Especially as well as she ran right at the end, but that's the way you want it to be," he said. "You want the seniors to have their best races at the end and to go out in style."

Harrison's Sharp and Laszkowski were sixth in the high hurdles and pole vault, respectively.

Sharp ran his season-best time of 14.4 seconds in the prelims

and 14.85 in the finals.

"Last year he made it to the semis; his goal this year was to make the finals," coach John Reed said. "He's a great athlete and I'm not at all surprised he did that well."

Sharp is the third Harrison hurdler in five years to score in the 110 highs, following in the footsteps of former state champ on Don Bryant and Kevin Bryant.

"I don't think any other school has done that, and that's a testament to the job coach (John) Schumacher does with the hurdlers."

Laszkowski also had his season-best performance at the state meet and broke his own school record with a pole vault of 14 feet.

"He's easily one of the top vaulters in his grade in the state," Reed said. "I think he could be a 16-foot vaulter in the next couple years, which would push the state record."

"It's neat to have someone that good," Reed said. "Four of the kids ahead of him (in the state meet) are seniors and the other is a junior."

The state record of 16-6 belongs to former Livonia, Franklin star Paul Terek, the 1997 state champion and freshman decathlete at Michigan State University.

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Under 12**	8/1/86 - 7/31/87	X	X
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Preps put goals on hold til '99

Wait until next year. That's what Westland John Glenn sophomore Latoya Chandler and Livonia Churchill junior Ryan Kenney will have to do following the Class A track and field finals Saturday.

Chandler (high jump) and Kenney (hurdles) were runner-ups in their respective events.

Ypsilanti's Maia Knox successfully defended her title in the girls high jump with a leap of 5-8.

Chandler, who won the Redford Union regional with an eye-popping 5-9, settled for second at 5-7.

But don't be surprised if Chandler, with two years of eligibility remaining, threatens the all-time high jump record of 6-11 1/2 set by

Capac's Elio Hayden in the 1990 state Class C meet.

RU regional champion Livonia Stevenson had an off-day, but senior Kelly McEneaney posted a personal best in the 1,600 run with a time of 5:11.8 (seventh place).

Stevenson's 3,200 relay team of McEneaney, Danielle Harris, Kelly Travis and Andrea Parker gained eighth with a time of 9:35.8.

In the boys meet, Devron City Central senior Joel Gaff edged Churchill's Kenney for the 300-meter hurdles title. Gaff was clocked at 38.72, Kenney 38.77.

Kenney also added a fourth in the 110 hurdles with a time of 14.68.

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