

Jeff, Harold Make Ottawa-Glandorf No. 1

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Amid disappointments and controversy, Ottawa-Glandorf's two splendid trackmen, Jeff Huggins and Harold Dehnart brought home the Class AA State Championship from Columbus Saturday evening.

Denhart provided the balance of power as Huggins, one of the state's best performers and certainly the best ever to come out of Putnam County, scored enough points himself to assure O-G a tie for the title.

The pair accounted for two firsts, a second, a fourth and a fifth place in the state meet to pile up 34 points.

Huggins was named the Class AA division's outstanding track athlete and brought back with him another trophy to add to the nearly three dozen he has earned during his four-year high school career.

He won the 220 and 440-yard dashes, but finished a disappointing fourth in the long jump and fifth in the 100. That accounted for 26 points, the same as the runnerup team from Columbus Mifflin.

Dehnart took second in the shot put to provide the eight point margin of difference.

While many an athlete would be elated at knowing he was second best in the state, it was a disappointing finish to his high school career for the big Titan. Harold was making his second straight appearance in the state meet and ever since he finished seventh in the state in his junior year, he had set his goal on winning the state championship.

FOLLOWING THE CLOSE of last fall's football campaign, where he starred as an offensive tackle and earned the team's most valuable offensive player title, Denhart took up the 12-pound steel ball and worked on it all through the winter and early spring.

Hoping to break the 60-foot barrier, Dehnart came close this season, setting a new school record at 59'5½". He was never defeated until the state tournament.

His throw at Columbus was one of his best of the year, but not quite good enough. It went 57'4" – just five inches short of the 57'9" of Walt Vrabel, the standout from Campbell Memorial whom Dehnart knew he would have to beat.

Finishing behind him were Jack Brinker of Teays Valley at 55'6½" and Don Alshouse of Paulding at 54'5½".

While Denhart was throwing, Huggins was participating in the long jump in another part of the huge Ohio State

Stadium, and what happened there nearly wrecked his day and O-G's chances of the title.

Jeff, and a host of other people around the long jump area are sure he was cheated out of the 11 inches on his last jump, and, if that is so, it cost him two places in the standings and his team four points.

He is sure that the official measuring the jump announced his leap at 21'11½", just one inch short of his own school record. He left the area believing he was in second place behind Ralph Stringer, Leavittsburg, who had gone 22'3¾".

However, the official clerk wrote 21'½" on the record and no amount of arguing on the part of the participants, spectators or coaches could change it. There was no appeal.

HUGGINS HAD a better jump in the preliminaries when he qualified amount the top seven boys for the finals. That one was 21'8½" and that was the jump with which he was given final credit and his fourth place finish.

However, he did not know this until he was in the blocks waiting for the gun to start the 100-yard dash. Just as the century was about to start, the announcement of the long jump standings was made over the public address system and the shock of being pushed back two places seriously threw him.

"It really shook him up," Coach Sam Gomer said.

Huggins had a false start on the first gun and had to be careful not to do it again, lest he be disqualified. He was slow getting out of the blocks but was still timed in at 10.1 in a very tight race.

The winning time in the 100 was 9.9 by Larry Jackson of Mifflin who was just inches ahead of Springfield Catholic's Lonnie Bell. Brian Storm of Washington Court House was timed at 10 flat and Tyran Pardue of Youngstown North was given fourth in 10.1, inches ahead of Huggins. Steve Jones of Twinsburg Chamberlain was the sixth scorer in 10.2.

"I nearly let that ruin my day," Huggins said of the long jump decision. "I was boiling when we ran the 100, but I cooled off by the time the 440 came around."

He was his own self and then some in the 440 and the 220.

Jeff broke his own school record one more in the 440 with a time of 49 seconds flat, winning by a good five yards over Steve Wilson of Chesapeake.

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Wilson's time was 49.5, followed by Ken Norman, Orrville, 49.9; Keith Klinger, Perry, 50.0; Rob Durdle, Wes Alexandria, Twin Valley, 50.6 and Chuck Gerhart, Wynford 50.7.

OTTAWA-GLANDORF held a 10-point lead over the Columbus team going into the 220 and Huggins had to at least score in order to hang onto the state title.

Most of the same boys were entered as they were in the 100 and Mifflin had Jackson, one of the best in the state. Running on the curve, it was hard to tell who was in the lead for the first few yards, but Huggins called upon every last bit of sap he had left and had the stagger made up midway in the curve.

He was in the lead at the head of the straight-away and held on to beat out Jackson by .1 second. The winning time was 22.0, the O-G sprinter's second best of the year and just .2 second behind his school record.

Third place went to Bill Scott of Huron at 22.3, fourth to Lonnie Bell at 22.5 and sixth to Brian Storm at 22.5.

Saturday's victory, the dream of every coach, possible spells the end of an era for highly successful coach Sam Gomer, whose Titans were state runners-up last year. Gomer boastfully predicted at the start of the season that his team would win the state championship.

BUT IT WAS the last appearance in an O-G uniform for superstars Huggins and Dehnart who carried their squad through a year of ups and downs and boys such as these usually come only once in a lifetime to most coaches.

He has some good prospect coming up, but some are as far down as the eighth grade and for the next few years it is going to be might hard to replace his state champions, who have won so many trophies in the past two years that school officials are faced with the task of building \$1,000 worth of trophy cases this summer.

Gomer has built up a track dynasty at O-G, having won the Western Buckeye League championship five of the last six years, including the last four straight. They were virtually undefeated in 1971 when they missed the state title by just two points, taking one big meet after another.

This year was different and things took a turn for the worse early in the season when crack half-miler and relay man Jeff Ducey injured a leg and was lost for the season.

After their first two meets were cancelled because of bad weather, they finally opened with a victory over Defiance, but two days later lost to Lima Senior. Another two days and they had to settle for second place in their own Gold

Medal meet. They also took only second in the Defiance College Relays when Huggins' vaulting pole was stolen and he was defeated for the first time this year.

However, later in the same week the Titans rebounded to win the big Toledo Blade Relays and a week later they eked out a victory in the Western Buckeye meet at Elida.

ALTHOUGH THEY WON the Elida Relays, O-G never did well on the Elida track where they ran four times this year, and were third in the Sectional meet.

On May 10, they won the District crown at Bowling Green, defeating in the process the two teams which finished ahead of them in the Sectional, this coming on the prowess of Dehnart and Huggins, also.

During all this time, Dehnart was undefeated, winning the shot put in some meets by nearly 10 feet over all other opponents. His only loss this year came Saturday at Columbus.

Huggins was never defeated in the long jump or the sprints until the District when he was nosed out in the 100. During most of the season, he was a star in the pole vault also, his best being a school and stadium record, shattering 13'7". His only loss in that event was in the controversial Defiance Relays.

However, he and Coach Gomer both knew that as good as he was in the pole vault, he probably would not make it to the state in that event and right they were. The winning jump at Columbus was 14'2" and it took 13'10" to score.

They decided his best bet would be to forget his beloved pole and enter the 440 in tournament competition. It was a wise choice. When he came home ahead of the pack in the quarter mile at Columbus, that made it official that Ottawa-Glandorf trackmen were Number One in the State.