

Columbus Grove Seizes State Championship

Putnam County Sentinel – Charlie Warnimont, Sports Editor – June 11, 2003

Throwers, Runners Combine for Championship

Saturday morning Columbus Grove found themselves in position win a state championship.

Led by the throwing tandem of Blake Maag and Tayt Mayberry, the Bulldogs' went into the running finals of the Division III boys track meet with 26 points. All the Bulldogs needed were solid performances on the track to make things happen.

Columbus Grove was able to do that as they had three top four finishes which provided the needed margin to win a state championship.

Coming off a state runner-up performance in the Division III track and field meet, the Bulldogs went one better this season as they were proclaimed 2003 state champions of the 96th annual state track and field at Dayton's Welcome Stadium.

Led by the throwing combination of Blaine Maag and Tayt Mayberry and a host of eager sprinters, Columbus Grove finished the Division III state meet with 42 points. The total was 13 points better than state runner-up Old Fort, which grabbed the silver trophy with 29 points.

Having finished as a runner-up to Marion Pleasant a year ago, the Bulldogs didn't use that as any added motivation. However, they stayed within themselves and when a second chance presented itself, they went for it with gusto.

"It's funny, they never really talked about it much," first year coach Jerry Cooper said. "In football, we felt like we had a real opportunity to be state champions and that didn't happen."

"At the beginning of the week, we told them opportunities like this don't come around very often. We told them to come down here and make the most of their opportunity. I'm really proud of the kids that they were able to do that. They came down here, put out their best effort and now they're state champions."

Columbus Grove got off to a rousing start Friday as senior Tayt Mayberry and sophomore Blaine Maag provided the Bulldogs with 26 points as they had

double placements in the shot and discus. Three of the four final distances were personal bests for the throwers.

Mayberry finished fourth in the shot put with a top throw of 53'10", just a half inch off the third place throw of Ottoville's Matt Knippen, 53'10½". Magg finished sixth in the field with a toss of 52'10".

The discus vaulted the Bulldogs to the top of the standings as the Grove pair went one-two with their top throws of the season.

Maag kept the Division III discus title in the family as he won with a throw of 175'4", while Mayberry grabbed the runner-up spot with a throw of 170'5".

One year earlier, it was Blaine's brother, Blake, that had captured the state title with a throw of 117'8", although when Blaine received his championship medal Friday afternoon he was announced as Blake winning the event. A correction was announced a short time later.

"Before the discus, Tayt said he felt we could go one-two," Blaine said. "I didn't know but when he threw 170, I was like okay, maybe we can do this. To have it happen was really neat."

"It's really great winning a state championship. After Blake finished college (he finished second in the MAC discus throw for Kent State), he came back and not only helped me be more consistent, but he also helped Tayt. It really helped with my confidence."

For Mayberry, just making the podium was an accomplishment after a severe knee injury cut short his football season and denied him a shot at playing basketball.

"My main goal was to get down here and just get on the podium," Mayberry said. "Before the season, they weren't sure if I could run track or not. I knew the knee was coming around and if I couldn't run, I wanted to try the shot and discus."

"I had tried it last year when Blaine and Blake were getting ready for state I had some decent throws, but there's a little more to it than throwing a football (when asked to compare the sports)."

Columbus Grove Seizes State Championship

Putnam County Sentinel – Charlie Warnimont, Sports Editor – June 11, 2003

“They just did a phenomenal job,” Cooped added. “They had some of their best throws today. Tayt had his best in the shot by a foot and a half, while both had personal bests in the discus. They are competitors and you saw that come out. For Tayt, this is a real crowing achievement. From the way he started, he wanted to get on the podium in both events and he did.”

Coming into Saturday with a double digit lead, the Bulldogs turned their hopes over to the sprinting core. While they didn’t place as well as they wanted, they were able to add to the lead making the championship possible.

Columbus Grove opened Saturday by finishing fourth in the 400 relay as they were nipped at the line by Smithville. Both teams had identical times of 43.61. Lisbon’s David Anderson won the event with a time of 43.17, while Liberty-Benton was second in 43.33.

Teaming up for the placement were seniors Trevor Miller and Steve Palte, Maag and junior Ben Stechschulte as the anchor.

Miller then added to the lead with a fourth pace finish in the open 400. His time was 49.90, just off his school record time.

“The feat of running the open 400 is worse than running the open 400,” Miller said. “We had five minutes to wait and everyone makes a pact to have it end in a tie. It doesn’t work that way, but I gave it the best I had and that’s all I can ask.”

“I don’t think we were as jacked up for the 4x1 as we could have been. I thought our handoffs were crisp, but I guess it wasn’t meant to be.”

Miller then joined sophomores Danny Woods and Taylor Jesko and Stechschulte to finish third in the 1600 relay. Stechschulte nearly caught rival Pandora-Gilboa for second place as the Rockets finished in a time of 3:23.37 and Grove crossed the line in 3:23.45, setting another school record.

Xenia Christian shocked the field as they won with a time of 3:22.79. The Rockets and Bulldogs had the top times going into the 1600 relay final.

“I felt I had let the team down in the 4x1. We were in a good position, but a couple of teams passed me,” Stechschulte said. “I told them if they got it, (the baton) to me in position, I’d try to get it done (in the 1600 relay).”

“When I dropped back I didn’t panic. When running the 400, I try to pick it up (my pace) in the final 100 where most guys start to tighten up. That’s where I kick as hard as I can and bring it home”

“Over the course of the season, the 4x1 and 4x4 teams have been solid,” Cooper said. “When we talked Friday night, we knew we had some good times and we just had to run our race.”

“Track is an offensive sport. You can’t play any defense in track. You have to put up your numbers and hope for the best. We came down in only five events, put up 42 points and that was good enough to win a state championship.

“We set school records in the 4x100 and 4x400. Tayt threw further than he ever had in the discus and both Maag and Mayberry threw well in the shot. Our kids put together their very best effort. That’s what the state track meet is all about. It’s about competition. Our kids are competitors and that’s why we’re standing on the podium.”