

Columbus Grove Girls Repeat PCL Champions

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A fourth straight Putnam County League track title was on the mind of the Columbus Grove girls track team Friday night. While the lady Bulldogs accomplished that feat, the way they did it left their coach almost speechless.

Columbus Grove accumulated 217 points in winning their fourth straight league title. Their point total more than doubled second place Fort Jennings which nabbed the runner-up spot with 103 points. Ottoville grabbed the third position with 88 points and Pandora-Gilboa was fourth with 85 points. Continental finished fifth with 23 points and Leipsic had seven points for sixth place.

While repeating their championship didn't appear to be a problem, going over the 200 point mark was a first for any team in the PCL. It was a mark that even their coach didn't feel would be reached going into the meet.

"There was a question, the other day, that asked if the Columbus Grove girls would score 200 points," Grove coach Connie Arthur said. "I didn't think it would happen, but they did it. I'm speechless. This team just keeps getting better, week after week. Just when I think I've see the best they can give, they keep giving me more. This is just such a fun group to work with."

While the Bulldogs are led by senior's Abbie Stechschulte and Brittany Begg, who both have signed to attend Division I colleges. Arthur knows Grove's success is deeper than her two senior leaders.

"They are great leaders and the girl's kind of look at them for leadership," Arthur says. "I think their leadership pays off in practice when the girls have to decide whether to run with them or not. They are great leaders in that respect during practice and that's when it pays off in the meet. They all work together in the meets. They see each other perform better and that just kind of builds and builds."

While a superb team effort helped the Bulldogs reach new heights, Stechschulte and Begg helped pave the way with four wins each, including a total of four new meet records.

Stechschulte, who is headed for West Virginia next fall to run track, opened her meet by winning the long jump with a leap of 17' ¾". She also won both hurdle events while breaking the meet record in both.

In the 100 hurdles, the senior blew away the field by over two seconds as she won in a record time of 14.70. Teammate Ali Hoffman took second place with a time of 16.9.

In the 300 hurdles, Stechschulte crossed the finish line with a record time of 46.0 which also was two seconds quicker than runner-up and teammate Hoffman at 48.20.

This was not accurate. Chelsea Burgei of Ottoville set the 300 hurdles record in 2001 with a time of 45.5

Stechschulte and Begg also joined forces to win the 400 relay in a record time of 50.30. They were joined by Hoffman and Alli Raines to set the record.

"It was a lot of fun, a very nice reward," Stechschulte said of her performance at the meet. The senior also is coming back after a knee injury hampered her season as a junior. "I started a little shaky in the long jump, but once I busted a 17'0" jump in the long jump things picked up. There are times when I start slow and just need something to get motivated."

Begg won the 100 dash in a time of 12.80 and won the 400 dash in a meet record time of 1:00.40. She also teamed with Raines, Kirsten Ruen and Tricia May to win the 1600 meter relay in a time of 4:10.40.

May also won the 800 meter run in a time of 2:26.0 and Kayla King won the 3200 meter run with a time of 13:04.20.

The Bulldogs were helped to an early lead as they won four of the five field events. Cara May won the high jump as she cleared 5'2" while Bethany Fuerst and Dena Benroth were winning the shot put and discus with record heaves.

This was not true. The PCL shot put record was set by Carol Lammers of Miller City in 1977 when she threw the shot 40'10½".

Fuerst won the shot put with a throw of 38'8 ¾" before Benroth came back to win the discus with a record toss of 127' 7 ½".

"Our throwers did an outstanding job tonight," Arthur added. "It is something they have been working hard at and tonight it just clicked and I know they are very excited. What surprises me the most is the number of personal records we set tonight. This is a very goal oriented group. They are great goal setters and once they meet that goal, they love resetting it. They are a very determined group and they work well together."

Fort Jennings grabbed the runner-up spot despite winning just two events Friday night. Both of their wins came in relay events. The Musketeers won the 3200 meter relay as Brittany Stechschulte, Alesha Norbeck, Traci Hammonds and Brooke Norbeck crossed the finish line in a time of 10:35.0. Columbus Grove finished second in 10:38.0.

Fort Jennings also won the 800 relay with a time of 1:49.20. Running this event was Traci Hammond, Christina Metzger, Megan Knippen and Diana Smith.

The Musketeers also finished second in the 1600 meter and 400 meter relays and Jenna VonLehmden was second in the long (15'4 ¼").

"It's real hard trying to chase down first place," Fort Jennings coach Kevin Horstman said. "Actually we came in hoping for second place which we thought might go to Ottoville. To beat Grove in a 4x8 on the girl's side was totally unexpected. We were running two freshmen and two sophomores and they all ran their best times of the season. This is probably the first year we didn't score a lot of points in the sprints. We took two places, but not always high places. We come into a season with two goals, finishing second in the league and getting to Dayton. We accomplished the one now in three weeks we will see if we accomplish the second."

Ottoville also won a pair of events as they finished in third place. Sophomore Brittany Klima won both of the events for the Big Green in record setting fashion.

Klima opened her day by clearing 10'0" in the pole vault for a meet record. She also attempted the state record but fell short of that mark. Klima also won the 200 dash with a meet record time of 26.90. The sophomore also finished second in the high jump (5'0") and was the runner-up in the 400 (1:01.90).

Pandora-Gilboa's Jessie Latham had the meet's other win as she won the 1600 meter run with a time of 5:45.90.

SUMMARY

Columbus Grove 217, Fort Jennings 103, Ottoville 88, Pandora-Gilboa 85, Continental 23 and Leipsic 7.

- SHOT PUT - Bethany Fuerst (CG) 38'8¾"
- *NR DISCUS - Dena Benroth (CG) 127'7½"
- HIGH JUMP - Cara Maag (CG) 5'2"
- LONG JUMP - Abbie Stechschulte (CG) 17'¾"
- *NR POLE VAULT - Brittany Klima (Ottoville) 10'0"
- *NR 100 M. INTERMEDIATE HURDLES - Abbie Stechschulte (CG) 14.70
- 300 METER LOW HURDLES - Abbie Stechschulte (CG) 46.0
- 100 M. DASH - Brittany Begg (CG) 12.80
- *NR 200 METER DASH - Brittany Klima (Ottoville) 26.90
- *NR 400 M. DASH - Brittany Begg (CG) 1:00.40
- 800 METER RUN - Tricia May (CG) 2:26.0
- 1600 M. RUN - Jessica Latham (PG) 5:45.90
- 3200 M. RUN - Kayla King (CG) 13:04.20
- *NR 400 METER RELAY - Abbie Stechschulte, Brittany Begg, Ali Hoffman & Alli Raines (CG) 50.30
- 800 METER RELAY - Traci Hammond, Christina Metzger, Megan Knippen and Diana Smith (FJ) 1:49.20
- 1600 METER RELAY - Brittany Begg, Alli Raines, Kirsten Ruen and Tricia May (CG) 4:10.40
- 3200 METER RELAY - Brittany Stechschulte, Alesha Norbeck, Traci Hammond and Brooke Norbeck (FJ) 10:35.0