

IH speeding along in 400

Coffman, Kroner starring

By PAUL SCHWARTZ

STAFF WRITER

NEW YORK — For now, at least, Indian Hills High School appears to be the North Jersey capital for 400-meter runners.

Sophomore Rebecca Coffman ran the eighth-fastest girls 400 in Bergen County history, 58.9, to take fifth Monday in the prestigious Varsity Classic meet at the Armory Track Center.

On Sunday, Garrett Kroner will try to add the State Meet of Champions 400 title to his Group 2 crown earned Jan. 29.

"I've been running at a new level this year," said Coffman, who won the 100 and 200 titles last spring in the NBIL Division 2 and Bergen B meets. "This is a

new event for me because I didn't run the 400 much last spring and didn't run it at all last winter."

But the former 63-second sprinter has been running faster from her first race of the winter and qualified for Sunday's State Meet of Champions by running 1:00.38 for third place out of an unseeded heat at the State Group 2 meet.

Her 58.9 400 is more than two seconds ahead of any other girls 400 runner in North Jersey this winter and far ahead of her own expectations.

"I'm shocked," said Coffman. "I never thought I'd break 60 so quickly and by so much. Now I'm really excited about running Sunday and trying to get a medal."

Indian Hills indoor head coach Tony Ciccone thinks Coffman is just beginning to show what she can do.

"She's such a strong girl and so powerful looking that when she came out originally we thought she'd be with the weights," said Ciccone. "And with all the weight people we graduate this year, she's going to do some throwing next year."

For now, Coffman is confining herself to the 400, where she has a great role model in Kroner.

"He's such a motivator and role model for me," says Coffman. "The boys and girls work out together although we each do our own individual work. He's awesome to watch."

For his part, Kroner skipped the 400 Monday, running the 200, the event he'll probably skip at the State Meet of Champions. But he didn't waste his time Monday, running 22.0, the Bergen County indoor record for the comparatively new indoor event and taking second behind State 200 co-favorite A.J. Bunton of West Deptford.

"I don't really like being the target Sunday," said Kroner, who is the top seed after finishing sixth last winter and fourth in the spring. "There are so many good runners in the race and anything can happen, but I'm enjoying the season so far."

North Jersey athletes enjoyed an excellent day in the meet, which drew more than 130 schools from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. More than 30 medals went to area athletes, including golds by triple jumpers Kyle Lindsay of Eastside and Consandria Walker of Hackensack. Walker's win was especially sweet, because her 37-3/4 was her best jump in nearly two years and the top mark in New Jersey this winter.

TRACK AND FIELD

VARSITY CLASSIC

AT THE ARMORY TRACK CENTER

BOYS

55 — 1. A.J. Bunton, West Deptford, 6.2; 5. Tinashe Kitchen, Fort Lee, 6.7.

55 HH — 1. Kyle Edmonds, Metuchen, 7.6; 6. Anthony Chisholm, Wayne Hills, 7.8.

200 — 1. A.J. Bunton, West Deptford, 21.7; 2. Garrett Kroner, Indian Hills, 22.0 (Bergen County record, old record, 22.2 by Melvin Sampson, Hackensack, 2001); 4. Tinashe Kitchen, Fort Lee, 22.7.

400 — 1. Bryant McCombs, Old Bridge, 49.6; 3. Marc Muckle, Teaneck, 51.1.

800 — 1. Anthony LaMastro, Pope John, 1:54.1; 5. Tommy San George, Teaneck, 1:57.9.

1,600 — 1. Kyle Soloff, Morris Hills, 4:27.1; 6. Calvin Lee, Old Tappan, 4:31.2.

3,200 — 1. Ben Massam, Chatham, 9:12.4 (record, old record, 9:27.1 by Mike Myers, Eastern, 2000); 4. Will Nowicki, Pasack Valley, 9:40.2.

Shot put — 1. Pierre James, Franklin, 55-6 1/2; 3. Jeff Seidel, Hasbrouck Heights, 54-4 3/4.

High jump — 1. Ryan Manning, West Orange, 6-6 (ties meet record held by four others); 5. tie between Tyler Cole, Toms River South, Garruty Etienne, West Orange, Shawn Rembecky, Paramus, Jon Massai, Paramus, Adam Hegel, Manalapan and Ricardo Kennedy, Hunterdon Central, 5-9.

Long jump — 1. Ryan Manning, West Orange, 23-10 (record, old record, 22-10 by Val Sisti, DePaul, 2004); 4. Lindsay, Eastside, 21-6.

Triple jump — 1. Lindsay, Eastside, 47-3 3/4 (record, old record, 46-6 1/2 by Jason Ramsey, Mount Vernon, 2002); 2. Ted Leshner, Northern Highlands, 46-6.

Pole vault — 1. Devon Purves, Haddonfield, 15-0 (ties meet record held by three others); 3. Matt Steeg, Don Bosco, 13-6; 5. Greg Stripe, Mahwah, 13-0; 6. Claude Guinchard, Don Bosco, 13-0.

1,600 relay — 1. Camden (McGriff, Waugh, Goree, Pinckney), 3:26.5.

3,200 relay — 1. Pleasantville, 8:00.2; 2.

CBA, 8:06.9; 3. Monroe-Woodbury, 8:10.4; 4. Westfield, 8:12.0; 5. Hillsborough, 8:13.0; 6. Morris Hills, 8:13.9.

Distance medley — 1. Arlington, 10:28.5; 2. Ridgewood, 10:28.8.

GIRLS

55 — 1. Ogechi Nwaneri, Chatham, 6.8 (ties record set by Karen Robinson, New Rochelle, 2002); Consandria Walker, Hackensack, 7.1.

55 HH — 1. Lynne Layne, New Rochelle, 7.9; 3. Lara-Jane Que, Ridgewood, 8.3.

200 — 1. Lynne Layne, New Rochelle, 24.7; 5. tie between Sophia Davis, Queen of Peace, Shavoonah Moss, Passaic Tech, Amy Salek, Ramapo, and Kamice Smalls, Camden, 26.3.

400 — 1. Celeste Holder, Parsippany, 57.6.

800 — 1. Laura Cundey, Washington Twp., 2:21.8.

1,600 — 1. Ashley Higginson, Colts Neck, 4:54.7 (record, old record, 5:00.5 by Caitlin Smith, IHA, 2003).

3,200 — 1. Kathleen Davies, St. Basil's, 11:07.8; 4. Andrea Rothschild, Demarest, 11:20.3.

Shot put — 1. Kadine Johnson, New Rochelle, 43-5 1/4.

High jump — 1. tie between Carin Knight, New Rochelle and Bianca Stewart, Columbia, 5-4.

Long jump — 1. Celeste Holder, Parsippany, 18-10 (record, old record, 18-7 by Carlene Cummings, Englewood, 1998); 4. Arianna Pomo, Saddle Brook, 16-10 1/2.

Triple jump — 1. Consandria Walker, Hackensack, 37-3 3/4; 2. Shenise Halsey, Old Tappan, 35-4 3/4; 5. Lynn Matanle, Glen Rock, 34-3 1/2.

Pole vault — 1. Tara Oberg, Hunterdon Central, 11-0; 3. Cassie Wong, Ridgewood, 10-6; 6. tie between Tricia Murphy Kennelly, Mahwah and Michelle Telofski, Clifton, 9-6.

1,600 relay — 1. Suffern, 3:59.1; 4. Teaneck, 4:06.8.

3,200 relay — 1. Roxbury, 9:18.1 (record, old record, :20.3 by New Rochelle, 2002; 5. Ridgewood, 9:46.0.

Distance medley — 1. Roxbury, 12:05.3; 4. Ramapo, 12:37.6.

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KING AND QUEEN OF THE MILE

Within 24 hours on Feb. 3-4, a pair of New Jersey runners established themselves as the king and queen of Northeast HS milers and, in Danielle Tauro's case, likely for the entire country as well.

At the Millrose Games on Feb. 3 at Madison Square Garden, Danielle Tauro of Southern Ocean met and defeated a highly talented field that included the best available high school milers from New England and New York in 4:51.89, the second fastest winning time in the 23-year history of the race.

Danielle ran a typical race, staying from 10 to 15 meters off the strong pace set by Lindsey Ferguson of Saratoga and Colleen Wetherbee of Dennis-Yarmouth (Ma.). She made her move with a lap and a half to go and won going away by five yards, also leaving behind 2004 National Footlocker CC champ Aislinn Ryan of Warwick Valley (NY).

The next day, at the New Balance College Classic at the NY Armory Center, Craig Forys of Colts Neck, running in the open race, Forys finished 7th in 4:09.77. Forys had not met the stiff requirements for the Millrose race, which was won in much slower time.

There will be those who dispute Danielle's standings, claiming that status for Nicole Blood of Saratoga, who is running independently this year and, the day after Tauro's feat, ran about five seconds faster at the New Balance meet. The New York Armory track is, of course, much faster than the smaller MSG oval, so the times come out about equal.

Blood had defeated Ryan two weeks earlier at the Yale Invitational on the upgraded Coxe Cage track in 4:53+, further indication that a race between her and Danielle—which could happen at one of the National meets in March—would be a close match, with our money on Tauro's superior kick.

Both Forys and Tauro have qualified for two events at the Feb. 12 all-group meet at Seton with no indication as yet what will be their choice. The Feb. 12 schedule allows Forys an easy double, though he would get plenty of competition in the 3200 from Ben Massam of Chatham; an 800/1600 double for Tauro would be almost impossible and, since she has already proven herself in the longer distance, she might just tackle Lauren Gregory of Morris Knolls again in the 800.

Both are almost certain to run individually at Penn in April since neither has the kind of support necessary to make a real bid in the DMR, despite their having anchored victories at that distance in the recent state relay meets. These races would give them further opportunity to prove their credentials as the area's—and, again, possibly the country's—best in their events.

Forys has already committed himself to run the 2M at the Nike Invitational in March at Landover, Md. His goal there will be to join Kevin Byrne of Paramus Catholic as the state's only indoor sub-9:00 runner at that distance. The way he ran his 9:22.08 at the Gr. III meet indicates this is much more than a dream on his part.

AN OPPORTUNITY

The weekend of Feb. 18-19 is a fairly open one on the New Jersey indoor calendar, though there are the Last Chance meet in Jersey City on Friday and the Coca-Cola Invitational at the NY Armory on Saturday.

But there is also a unique opportunity for young New Jersey distance runners that weekend: the USTAF cross-country championships and world qualifier at Van Cortlandt Park. The 6K junior women's is on Saturday and the 8K junior men's race on Sunday. The only NJ entry so far is, not surprisingly, Briana Jackucewicz of Colts Neck.

Entries close on Feb. 15. Information is available on the USATF website.

THE SECOND SEASON

While, officially, the New Jersey high school season ends this weekend with the all-group championships, there is still a lot of business on the agenda, including several local championships, a couple of invitationals, the Easterns on Feb. 28 and the two national meets on the second weekend of March.

Long ago, we dubbed all this "the second season," which is, to many coaches and athletes, more important (and rewarding) than the usual state championship procedures which now rule all other sports in the state. To get an idea of what we are saying, just repeat the words "Penn Relays," to get a perspective of what the track season is all about.

The first shot in this year's second season took place on Feb. 6 with the Varsity Classic at the New York Armory Center.

On the boy's side, A.J. Bunton of West Deptford had a fine sprint double (hand-timed, unfortunately, at 6.2 and 21.7. Bryant McCombs weighed in with a 49.6 in the 400 (his chief rivals in this event were either injured—Shaquan Brown—or busy the day before at the Shore Conference meet where three went under 50.0). Anthony LaMastro of Pope John had a great double, a 3:06.5 leadoff 1200 in the DMR and then a 1:54.1 800 win over Mike Pachella of Wallkill Valley and Craig Forys. Ben Massam lowered his indoor 3200 PR to 9:12.4, Ryan Manning doubled at 6-6 in the HJ and 23-10 in the LJ, Pierre James of Franklin took the SP at 55-6 1/2, Kyle Lindsay had a MR 47-3 3/4 in the TJ and Devon Purvis sailed over the PV bar at 15-1/4.

For the girls, Ogechi Nwaneri had a hand-timed 6.8 in the 55 and a 24.9 for 2nd in the 200, Celeste Holder doubled the 400 and LJ at 57.6 and 18-10, Ashley Higginson topped Lauren Gregory in a 4:54.7 1600 and Consandria Walker had her best TJ in two years at 37-3 1/4 and Roxbury turned in an outstanding relay double at 9:18.1 and 12:05.3.

B: 55-Bunton 6.2. 2-Cloninger 6.3. 3-McGriff, Cmdn 6.3. 4-Wilson, Frnkln 6.5. 200-1-Bunton 21.7. 2-Kroner, IndHls 22.0. 4-Polhill, SHP 22.6. 5-Kitchen, FtLee 22.7. 6-Cloninger 22.8. 7-Epps, Engwd 23.0. 8-Rogers, Frnkln 23.0. 400-1-McCombs 49.6. 2-Lunkenheimer, OB 50.2. 3-Muckle, Tnck 51.1. 7-Greenfield, SoBrun 51.4. 800-1-LaMastro 1:54.1. 2-Pachella, WklV :54.6. 3-Forys :54.6. 5-San George, Tnck :57.9. 6-Behre, MtOlive :57.9. 7-DiOrio, Brdwtr :58.2. 10-Krewer, CN 2:00.9. 1600-1-Soloff, MH 4:27.1. 3-Decker, MH :28.7. 5-Mulcahy, Morr :30.0. 6-Lee, OT :31.2. 7-Smith, Rxby (Fr) :31.5. 3200-1-Massam 9:12.4. MR 2-Southwick, Vrhs :33.4. 3-Burke, Hadd :37.3. 4-Nowicki, PsckV :40.2. 5-McCullough, DBP :43.2. HH-1-Edmonds, Mtchn 7.6. 4-Galligan, MH 7.7. HJ-1-Manning, WO 6-6. 2-Dixon, MH 6-4. PV-1-Purves, Hadd 15-0.25TR. 2-Kline, Rxby 14-0. 3-Steig, DBP 13-6. 4-Zamora, Bnds 13-0. 5-Stripe Mhwh 13-0. 6-Guinchard, DBP 13-0. LJ-1-Manning 23-10. 3-King, MH 22-0. 4-Lindsay 21-6. TJ-1-Lindsay 47-3.75MR. 2-Lesher, NoHigh 46-6. 3-Rowbotham, ScPl 44-10.75. 4-Manning 43-7.25. 5-Heger, Mnlpn 43-5.5. SP-1-James 55-6.5. 3-Seidel, HasHts 54-4.75. 6-Barton, Clmba 50-2.75. 1600R-1-Cmdn 3:26.5. 3-Shore :27.6. 4-WO :27.7. 5-HuntC :28.2. 6-SP :31.3. 3200R-1-Plsnt 8:00.2. 2-CBA :06.9. 4-Wstfd :12.0. 5-Hlbro :13.0. 6-MH :13.9. DMR-1-Arlngtn (NY) 10:28.5. 2-Rdwd :28.8. 5-PJ :35.6. 6-WashT :44.1. 7-Pbrg :44.8. 8-DBP :45.8.

G: 55-1-Nwaneri, Chtn 6.8TR. 2-Walker, Hack 7.1. 3-Hart, Liv 7.1. 4-Meylor, WW 7.2. 5-Givner, Mont 7.3. 6-Jones, WW 7.3. 200-1-Layne, NewRoch 24.7. 2-Nwaneri 24.9. 3-Holder, Pspny 25.4. 4-Losey, Pisc 25.9. 5-Davis, QP; Smalls, Cmdn; Moss, PCT, & Salek, Rmpo 26.3. 9-McIntyre, SoBrun 26.4. 400-1-Holder 57.6. 2-Losey 57.8. 3-Boynton, SoBrun 58.1. 5-Coffman, IndHls 58.9. 6-Wimberley, CN 59.3. 7-Moss 59.9. 800-1-Cundey, WashT 2:21.8. 1600-1-Higginson 4:54.7. 2-Gregory :57.6. 3-Jackucewicz, CN 5:05.9. 4-Burkholder, hrke :11.5. 5-Bariexca, PJ :213.8. 6-Linnell, CN :14.4. 7-Ramsey, Rmpo :14.9. 3200-1-Davies, StBasil 11:07.8. 2-Pierret, Morr :15.4. 3-Hefferan, Pspny :17.0. 4-Rothschild, Dmrst :20.3. 5-Nelson, Hlbro :22.6. HH-1-Layne, NR 7.9. 2-Taft, BE 8.1. 3-Que, Rdwd 8.3. 4-J. Sharper, WW 8.3. 6-Johnson, Clmba 8.5. HJ-1-Stewart, Clmba 5-4. 3-Olexson & Horowitz, WH 5-2. PV-1-O'Berg, HC 11-0. 3-Wong, Rdwd 10-6. 4-Parks, HC 10-0. 5-Joseph, Livtn 10-0. LJ-1-Holder 18-10MR. TJ-1-Walker 37-3.25. 2-Halsey, OT 35-4.75. 5-Matanie, GlnRck 34-3.5. SP-1-Johnson, NR 43-5.25. 2-Scaramella, BE 39-8.5. 3-Johnson 39-2.5. 5-Price, Estn 37-5. 1600R-1-Suffrn 3:59.1. 3-SoBrun 4:03.5. 4-Tnck :06.8. 5-PJ :07.7. 6-Cmdn :08.4. 6-Chthm :08.9. 3200R-1-Rxby 9:18.1. 3-RBC :43.4. 5-Rdwd :46.0. 6-Ridge :47.9. 7-Hadd :49.8. 9-IHA :53.2. 10-Wstfd :55.1. 12-Mtcr :59.4. DMR-1-Rxby 12:05.3. 3-PJ :20.0. 4-Rmpo :37.6. 7-HC :40.6. 8-Ridge :41.6. 9-Vrhs :42.2. 10-OkKnll :44.1. 11-CHEst :52.2.