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Tigers finish second, Redbirds sixth, Warriors seventh, Panthers post bests at Granite City Invitational Meet

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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GRANITE CITY – Edwardsville High School's track team, led by Amari Brooks, who won both the shot put and discus throw with personal records, finished second at the Granite City Invitational boys track meet Friday afternoon at Memorial Stadium, scoring 84 points, edging Belleville West by a point. Alton finished sixth with 54.5 points, the host Warriors right behind in seventh with 51.5. Jersey finished in 15th place in the 16-team field, scoring five points. Mascoutah won the meet with 93 points.

Brooks won the discus with a throw of 164 feet, two inches, and the shot with a throw of 52 feet, three inches.

“It looked strong – I was actually over there for both of those (personal records),” said Tiger coach Chad Lakatos. “The wind definitely helped him, but sometimes, that's what you get. It's a big thrill – 160s will definitely get you on the medal stand at state. Both of them were P.R.s in the shot and disc.

“He just continues to improve,” Lakatos continued about Brooks. “Coach (Matt) Martin does a great job with our throwers, and Amari's obviously talented. You put a good coach and a talented athlete together, good things will happen. So I'm happy with Amari, and I hope he can continue to get better.”

The Warriors' Andrew O'Keefe was named athlete of the meet with wins in the 1,600 and 3,200 runs, with times of 4:21.23 and 9:36.21. In addition, the sprint relay teams all had top-eight finishes.

“This was probably our best finish of the season, and our guys really stepped up,” said Granite coach Tom Miller. “We medaled in all the sprint relays, which was a big deal today. We haven't done that in a while. Our sprinters have really been coming along this year, and what's really great, all our relays are mostly underclassmen, except for one senior (Eugene Williba). Eugene's doing a great job being a leader for us. Two seniors for us – Jordan Smith and Tyra Tindall – both stepped up and filled in the relays for us.

“Andrew O'Keefe stepped up for us,” Miller continued. “He was the track athlete of the meet, and won the mile and two-mile in amazing times, especially in heavy wind. The season's going great; we lost a lot of seniors from last year, and we only have a few this year, and not too many juniors. The bulk of our team is sophomores, and we have a few good freshmen. It's been a good year so far.”

O'Keefe won his heat in an entertaining race over Edwardsville's Franky Romano that had the crowd cheering to the end.

“O'Keefe's a great runner, and he's proven it the last couple of years,” Lakatos said. “I was happy the way our kids competed, and it makes for an exciting day. Sometimes, it's about the strengths, but you can see the showdown between O'Keefe and Franky Romano put on. It makes for an exciting distance atmosphere as well.”



Alton had a surprise third-place finish in the discus, with David Weaver lofting a throw of 156 feet, two inches, while Johnathan Bumpers took first in the 300-meter hurdles with a time of: 41.30. The sprint relay teams did well, finishing fifth in both the 4x100 and 4x200 meter races, and finished fourth in the 4x400 race.

“We're happy,' said Redbird coach Jeff White. “We're using some of our different runners today, some of our freshmen and sophomores. We were shorthanded this week, so we were missing a few of our top sprinters. But it was really great to see these guys come out and compete. We've been scoring points, and racing, competing in this stuff, and we're really happy with how we've done today with the guys we brought.”



Jersey's strength was in the relays as well, bringing home a sixth in the 4x800 relay and an eighth in the 4x400. The Panthers were coming off a busy week, and performed very well.

“We've got a high-powered meet,” said Jersey coach Harold Landon. “We're coming off a good week, where we won a quadrangular at (Civic Memorial), we had our Jersey Relays on Wednesday, and we won that five-team meet. And now, we're now bigger; a lot more talent at this meet. But we did well; our 4x800 got sixth place, our 4x400 was eighth. And some of our individual runners got some personal bests today.”

As far as individual runners who did well, Landon pointed to his three top seniors, Tom Rexing, Lucas Ross and Austin Koenig.

“Well, Tom Rexing was our top hurdler. . .I know he got :16.7 in the 110 hurdles,” Landon said. “Lucas Ross, he's our anchor leg in 4x100, 4x200, 4x400. Another senior who's really doing well for us is Austin Koenig. He ran a solid leg in the 4x800, and he's going to lead off the 4x400 for us. Those three seniors are kind of leading the way for us, and they need to be. And so, they're doing a good job, just not in leading the way, but senior leadership as well.”

And coming nearly at the halfway point of the season, the teams can use it as a gauge for their progress, even with the uncooperative weather conditions that has disrupted the entire spring sports season.

“This is the most talent we're going to be running against all year long,” Landon said. “There's some (Mississippi Valley) conference schools here; Mascoutah and Highland, Waterloo, so it was nice to see those schools as well.”

For the Panthers, Landon has some simple goals as they go through the rest of the season.

“Stay injury free, and better weather,” Landon said with a laugh. “As I said, injury free, and still improving our times. We've had some inclement weather, and really, with the inclement weather, we've had some good times and distances on our field events. If we get some warmer weather, I think you'll see our times come down more.”

“There's some good competition here,” White said. “Collinsville is really good this year, and there's some really good Class 2A teams here, like Marion and Mascoutah. They're both very good teams, and there's no easy races today for sure. And it's great to see this competition, to get out and have some decent temperatures to run in.”

And despite the bad weather, the Redbirds have been raring to go.

“It's been really hard with the weather,” White said. “We feel like we're a few weeks behind where we should be. But our guys are also very hungry to get out there and compete. They've just been dying for the competition the last couple of weeks, and we haven't been able to do it. So when they get out here, they're really excited to run. So that's good to see.”

And once the weather keeps getting better, Alton could turn out to be one of the surprise teams of the season.

“I think we're going to be pretty good, without a doubt, in a couple of weeks here,” White said, “when we get tuned up a little bit more and we get a couple of guys back. I think we're really going to turn some heads this year. We've got Johnathan Bumpers who won the 300-meter hurdles, and he's number one in the state in that right now, which is awesome. And then, we also had a great performance today with David Weaver in the discus. He was a surprise for us, and he got third place and was throwing over the state qualifying mark. So, we feel in a few weeks, we're going to shock some people.”

The Warriors also feel confident about their prospects going into the final weeks of the season.

“There's definitely some growing going on,” Miller said. “They've been patient with this weather, coming to practice every day. I'm really happy with this group of kids.”

Edwardsville's balance has been a big plus for them, and you can expect it to carry over into the final weeks.

“We try to attack and be smart with it,” Lakatos said, “but we're not getting greedy. I didn't go into Belleville West expecting to get second, I didn't come in here expecting to get third. We just put a meet lineup together and do the best we can. Because we are a well-balanced team, good things happen for us, and next week's going to be different for our team.”

Edwardsville will be hosting its Senior Night meet next Thursday night, then host the Winston Brown Invitational meet on April 21. And the Tigers are relishing the chance to run on their home track as well.

“Anytime you can run at home, it's a good feeling, and it's Senior Night, and that's special for them, too,” Lakatos said. “They're used to practicing there, and we always run well at home. So hopefully, we can put up some good times next week.”



GRANITE CITY INVITATIONAL BOYS TRACK AND FIELD MEET RESULTS

TEAM STANDINGS

Mascoutah, 93; Edwardsville, 84; Belleville West, 83; Marion, 73; Collinsville, 65; Alton, 54.5; Granite City, 51.5; Freeburg, 45.5; Harrisburg, 31; Springfield Southeast, 28; Waterloo, 27; Cahokia, 27; Madison, 20; Highland, 11.5; Jersey, 5; Jacksonville, 3

EVENT RESULTS (AREA TEAMS ONLY)

100 METERS: Jayden Singleton, Alton, T-fifth (11.1 seconds); Kenneth Bond, Edwardsville, T-fifth (11.1 seconds); Tim Johnson, Alton, T-14th (11.5 seconds)

200 METERS: Antonio Harrison, Alton, eighth (24.37 seconds); Justin Johnson, Edwardsville, 12th (25.38 seconds)

400 METERS: Jackie Townsend, Edwardsville, ninth (54.32 seconds); Justin Wiley, Granite City, 10th (54.85 seconds); Issac Hausman, Jersey, 21st (1:01.33); Gavin McGuire, Jersey, 23rd (1:02.78)

800 METERS: Wyatt Henning, Edwardsville, eighth (2:09.80); Jeremiah Perry, Granite City, ninth (2:10.11); Max Hartman, Edwardsville, 13th (2:11.69); Tony Harold, Granite City, 16th (2:17.33); Asher Stidd, Jersey, 17th (2:18.77); Jeff Guardado, Jersey, 20th (2: 21.20); Lucas Tankersly, Alton, 24th (2:29.82)

1,600 METERS: Andrew O'Keefe, Granite City, first (4:21.23); Franky Romano, Edwardsville, second (4:24.81); Zach Walters, Edwardsville, sixth (4:40.81); Andrew Bertman, Jersey, ninth (4:56.47); Christian Cazier, Jersey, 16th (5:16.95)

3,200 METERS: Andrew O'Keefe, Granite City, first (9:36.21); Roland Prenzler, Edwardsville, second (9:44.87); Jack Pfifer, Edwardsville, third (10:00.60); Jack Blomme, Granite City, eighth (10:56.95); Daniel Rojo, Alton, 14th (11:54.62)

4X100 RELAY: Alton, fifth (Wilson, Bumpers, Smith, Singleton; 44.34 seconds); Edwardsville, sixth (Bond, Abdur-Rahman, King, Johnson; 45.17 seconds); Granite City, seventh (Williba, Towns, Smith, Smith; 46.02 seconds); Jersey, eighth (Ross, Jackson, Goetten, Bartles; 46.54 seconds)

4X200 RELAY: Edwardsville fourth (Abdur-Rahman, Ryan, Battle, Swanson; 1: 32.65); Alton, fifth (Singleton, Wilson, Smith, Sanders; 1:33.97); Granite City, sixth (Williba, Towns, Tindall, Smith; 1:35.08); Jersey, 12th (Rosa, Jackson, Goelten, Bartles; 1:39.73)

4X400 RELAY: Alton, fourth (Bratton, Cummings, Wilson, Sanders; 3:32.03); Edwardsville, sixth (Ryan, Bond, Townsend, Powell; 3:33.73); Granite City, seventh (Tindall, Towns, Wiley, Williba; 3:35.61); Jersey, 11th (Koenig, Jackson, Goetting, Ross; 3:45.56)

FRESHMAN-SOPHOMORE 4X400 RELAY: Edwardsville, sixth (Borden, Smith, DeMare, Hill; 3:51.75); Granite City, seventh (Kaminski, Ford, Snead, Smith; 3:53.20); Jersey, eighth (Guardado, Simpson, Mueller, Longley; 3:55.85)

4X800 RELAY: Alton, third (Havis, Bruce, Sanders, Cummings; 8:27.30); Jersey, sixth (Bertman, Koenig, Hauspan, Stidd; 8:58.09); Edwardsville, seventh (Valdez, Meng, Gruben, O'Brien; 9:00.96); Granite City, 10th (Harold, Gilmore, Drake, Perry; 9:15.64)

HIGH JUMP: Montre Snead, Granite City, ninth (5-10); LaVontas Hairsto, Edwardsville, 14th (5-8)

TRIPLE JUMP: Donavon Green, Granite City, fourth (38-4.5); Ju'qui Womack, Alton, seventh (38-1.5); Chase Moore, Edwardsville, eighth (36-9.5); De'von Pearson, Alton, ninth (36-8.5); Chris Scott, Edwardsville, 12th (35-9.5); Kory Duich, Granite City, 13th (34-8)

SHOT PUT: Amari Brooks, Edwardsville, first (52-3); Blake Williams, Edwardsville, third (48-5); Myles Marfell, Alton, sixth (43-6.5); Anthony Guzman, Granite City, 10th (39-0); Donovan Porter, Alton, 15th (37-11); Kurt Clark, Granite City, 18th (35-3.5)

DISCUS THROW: Amari Brooks, Edwardsville, first (164-2); David Weaver, Alton, third (156-2); Anthony Guzman, Granite City, sixth (140-5); Cameron Kirkpatrick, Edwardsville, seventh (138-4); Myles Marfell, Alton, ninth (133-5); Kurt Clark, Granite City, 11th (121-10)

Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.