

High-flying Alton girls are prepared to sky through Saturday finals

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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The high-flying Alton girls track and field girls are poised to possibly score more points than any other team in school history Saturday at the IHSA Class 3A state meet.

LaJarvia Brown, Katie Mans and Jewel Wagner all came through in Friday's prelims with excellent qualifying performances for the Saturday finals.

Brown, a junior and defending champion in the Class 3A triple jump, posted the top performance in the prelims with a 39.08.0 leap. She was closely followed by Romeoville senior Cierra Pulliam (39-07.0). Brown also qualified with the third best 300 hurdles time (44.23), just behind Belleville East's Miya Dorsey (44.00); and Crete's Tineja Foy (44.07). She had the fifth best long jump in prelims (18-03). The top jump was by Chicago Mother McAuley's Briana Driver (19-7).

Triple jump officials placed a marker for the state record while Brown was jumping and she exceeded it on one attempt, but she scratched by a mere fraction. When Brown shot over the state mark, her coach Terry Mitchell said the crowd let out a gasp, but it wasn't meant to be on Friday. She said she hopes to get the state record in the triple jump on Saturday and win the event.

"I had a pretty good start," Brown said after she finished her field events. "I jumped 41-5 on my second jump, which would have been a state record, but I scratched. Since I am so young, it is great to have as much success individually and as a team."

Mans, the freshman sensation in the high jump, was the only first-year high school performer to make the finals in that event. She easily cleared 5-0 to start and also was over 5-3 with much to spare. A total of 20 qualified for the high jump finals, all clearing 5-3.

"My goal is to go 5-5 or higher and earn a spot on the podium," Mans said for Saturday's meet.

Wagner had a stellar performance in the shot put, tossing it 40-09.75 for sixth position; the leader was East St. Louis' Aailiah Heron (42-02.75).

Mitchell said he believes Mans is capable of going 5-6 or 5-7 in the high jump on Saturday and that should place her in the top six in the event.

The Alton coach said he looks for both Brown and Wagner to have equally powerful showings on Saturday.

"I was very pleased with their performances today," he said. "We have a chance to place pretty high if we score 30 points or better on Saturday."

