



(Journal Photo)

VITAL POINT-GETTERS—Gene Nelson (left) and L. J. Muddy are pictured with Northern High assistant track coach Fred Crawford, who tutors the high jumpers and pole vaulters. Nelson leaped 6 feet 1½ inches in the high jump and Muddy cleared 12 feet in the pole vault, both records for Northern High in a State meet, Saturday in Ann Arbor.

Gamble, Handiwork Keep Northern in Contention

By Doug Mintline
Journal Sports Writer

Ann Arbor — A gamble in the high jump plus trainer Jack Marlette's work with a pole vaulter almost was enough to give Flint Northern High an upset victory over Pontiac High in the State Class A track meet Saturday.

Viking coach Herb Badar in a conference with assistant coach Fred Crawford decided not to have Gene Nelson, Northern's top high jumper, make any jumps until the bar reached six feet.

Nelson had cleared six feet once and 6-1½ once during the season. The Viking coaches felt that since Nelson also had a fine chance in the pole vault they would not waste him in the high-jump preliminaries. They decided not to try Nelson until bar reached six feet.

It turned out to be a real gamble, since 5-11 eventually won points in the event. But it paid off when Nelson cleared 6-1½ for a second-place tie and 4½ points. Pontiac, which, possibly could have swept the top three places with its trio of 6-2 jumpers, was limited to 5 10/10 points on ties for second and fourth.

Marlette's handiwork came during the week. Viking vaulter L. J. Muddy suffered a severe ankle sprain on Monday afternoon. He didn't work out the rest of the week, except with Marlette in the training room with the heat, whirlpool and sound treatments.

Muddy leaped 12 feet, only

two inches less than his best of the season, to cop two and a half points.

Both Muddy's vault and Nelson's high jump were the best in history for Northern in a State meet.

Muddy also placed sixth for a point in the broad jump and Nelson cleared 11-6 for 3/5 of a point in the pole vault. In a meet settled by less than two points, their performances were vital.

They were so vital that if Northern had won the 880 relay, an extremely possible if, the Vikings would have copped the title by less than a point.

Central Coach Jim Whittaker also made two late switches.

First he pulled his ace 440 man, Ken Baxter, out of the open division for use as the medley-relay anchor. He also was able to use Paul Morrison and Henry Young as sprinters when they missed qualifying in the low hurdle and 220 preliminaries in the morning.

The result was an easy victory in 2:30.7, which cut into the point possibilities of both Pontiac and Northern.

In the 880 relay, Whittaker gave little Moses Williams his first chance to run a leg. And the Tribe coach also used Ron Watkins in the anchor spot for the first time. This unit missed by only inches of a State title.

In giving the results of the 220-yard dash, the public address announcer came to Watkins, who finished second. Apparently the list of finishers

had Watkins, FC, for Flint Central. The announcer hesitated after giving the name of Watkins, saying "Of, of Fort Custer."

Northern's Maurice Pea was only one tenth of a second off Art Johnson's sophomore record of 22.3 seconds in the 220-yard dash. It was especially impressive, considering he ran in gum-soled shoes after misplacing his spikes at the last minute. He placed sixth in the race.

Other Flint men who earned points were:

Northern—Bernard Williams, fourth, 100, and Reg Gillard, third, high hurdles. Gillard missed qualifying in the low hurdle preliminaries.

Central — Gary Crenshaw, fourth, mile; Bert Szabo, tie for sixth (11-6), pole vault; and George Friedriecksen, second 880.

Crenshaw's 4:31, Friedriecksen's 2:01, Wylie Rogers' 1:59.7 in the 880 for Central, Harvey Martin's 2:00.1 in the 880 for Northern and Dennis Wright's 49.9 in the 440 for Northern were their best performances of the season.

The improvement of Central's team for a strong third place further enhances Flint as one of the State's top track centers. This is especially true when you consider that much of the Tribe strength will be back next season.

Northern won track titles in 1950 and 1953 and second-place for the last five years.