

# Coldwater's Ernst wins state high hurdles title

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STURGIS — Overcome, or be overcome.

That was the reality of the situation in Saturday's State Class B Boys' and Girls' Track Meet at Sturgis High School.

Coldwater's Jeff Ernst took the first option, solving a season-long problem of slow starts out of the blocks just in time to win a state title in the 110-meter high hurdles.

For others, it was much more complicated.

Grand Rapids Christian's Joan DeMaat was overcome by the thrill of victory in the 1600. She openly wept with joy and later won the 800, which helped propel the Eagles to the girls' team title.

But DeMaat was felled by sharp pains in her side as she tried for her third victory of the day, and couldn't finish the 3200 after challenging briefly.

Gull Lake distance ace Kammy Louden was hampered by a painful muscle pull in her left thigh and, though she finished both the 1600 and 3200, she failed to place and never was a factor.

For others, they were overcome not by emotion . . . not by injuries . . . but by better athletes.

Ernst captured his preliminary heat in 15 seconds and tied Oscoda's Les Dahl in the semifinals, again winning in 15 seconds. Ernst then worked his way through the final in 14.7, a mere .1 seconds in front of Holt's Wayne Coates. Dahl was fourth.

"My start has been slow all year

long," Ernst said, obviously pleased about his unusually fast exit from the starting blocks. "I discovered that I have been too high in the blocks."

. . . and too fast out of them for the six other finalists yesterday.

Ernst's triumph accounted for all 10 of Coldwater's points as the Cardinals tied Tecumseh, Hastings and Grosse Ile for 14th place among the 47 teams that scored at least one point.

Flint Beecher captured the team title with 57 points despite winning just one event. Paul Richmond took the 800 in 1:54.8. But Beecher managed three second-place finishes and outdistanced runner-up Dexter by 15 points.

Ernst later tried to double in the 300 low hurdles, but could manage just third in his heat and didn't place in the top six overall. A false start wasn't what bothered Ernst, a senior.

"I think it serves to relieve the tension, and it almost can be a help. My problem was that I was able to hit only the first hurdle right," he said, explaining that the timing of his strides over the barriers was all wrong for the remainder of the race.

"No way will I place," he said immediately after his heat, and he was right.

Hastings was paced by Kevin Echtenaw's second-place finish in the discus and a fifth-place showing by Kerry Allen in the 800.

Echtenaw hurled the discus 152 feet, 6 inches — considerably shorter than the 167-3 logged by Ron Finch of Mt. Pleasant. Finch was one of two multiple winners in the boys' meet, also winning the

shot put (56-7/8).

Allen covered the 800 in 1:58.0.

Dexter's powerful showing came on the strength of triple winner Andreas Laut. He captured the long jump, with a leap of 22-8/4, and both sprints — winning the 100 in 10.5 and the 200 in 21.5.

In girls' competition, Christian won the meet's final event — the 1600 relay — to overtake Beecher for the team title. The Eagles totaled 30 points and Beecher finished with 28.

Marshall's Jill Craig was the only area competitor to score points, earning two for the Redskins with her fifth-place finish in the discus (115-0). Ortonville-Brandon's Diana Mason won with an effort of 121-0.

It was the first time the Class B meet had been held on a metric track. There will be no official metric meet records until yesterday's times are compared with those logged in next year's meet.

Though area place-winners were few and far between, three performances were good enough to win preliminary heats.

Gull Lake's Merritt Greenman comfortably won his 440 prelim. Sturgis' Terri Summey was victorious in a 100-meter hurdle preliminary, but could manage only fourth place in the semifinals — despite turning in a faster time than in her preceding race — and failed to finish in the top six overall.

Albion's 400 relay team of Dannielle Williamson, Debbie Burney, Pam Mitchell and Tammy Davis also was victorious in the prelims.