

# Wilcher, Central roll in city track

By Doug Bradford  
News Staff Writer

Thomas Wilcher just had won the 110-meter high hurdles going away when he was called to the long jump at King High School yesterday.

An 18-year-old senior standout from Central High, Wilcher smiled through his perspiration. "Don't I get a rest?" he asked.

The officials at the Detroit high school track championship — involving the Public School and Catholic leagues — just looked at him, then slowly shook their heads. It was the slowest movement of the day there.

Wilcher shrugged, removed his sweat suit, and almost in the same motion, took off. He jumped 22 feet 8 inches, which, as it turned out, was enough to win.

Just for good measure, on his third jump, he hit 22-11½.

"It was OK," said Wilcher, who has soared 24-7 and who will ascend to the University of Michigan next year on a football scholarship.

"I just missed long jump records by this much in the past," he said, holding out two fingers, stretched wide enough for a jersey thread.

Along with the long jump and the 110-meter hurdles, Wilcher also won the 300-meter low hurdles (38.2).

Wilcher's performance led Central to an overwhelming team victory in the competition with 119 points. De Porres was second with 52 points.

In the girls' competition, another Public School League team dominated as Chadsey easily

downed second-place Central 102-54.

But the overall star of the meet was Wilcher, called "Heat Feet" by the folks who know him.

At age 11, he was the fastest schoolboy in Detroit in the high hurdles, quarter-mile, and 100-yard and 200-yard dash. He then began building his body for future track events with two hours of sprints and other exercises daily.

For the past two years, he has been the fastest in the high hurdles, in both junior and senior division years. And he holds the junior national record of 13.3 for the high hurdles.

When he gets to U-M, that high-hurdling ability will be called upon to augment his football talents.

Wilcher won the 110-meter hurdles in 14.2. "Nothing spectacular," he said. "Just cruisin' through." No one pushed him very much in the race to the finish line.

One of seven children, but the only one with recognized athletic ability, Wilcher said he thinks "speed" on his run to the sand pits and then "getting up in the air."

Just under 6 feet and weighing 184 pounds, his legs below the knees look like Popeye's arms as Wilcher drives forward high and hard.

"I don't eat anything special before I come out," said "Heat Feet," who is kind of proud of his nickname.

"If I thought about food, I'd probably start skipping meals, and I sure don't want to do that."

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Central's Thomas Wilcher took three events.