

New Event, New Rule Highlight Prep Track '84

By Al Palmeri

Two changes will affect high school track and field teams in Michigan this year.

A new event, the two-mile relay, has been added. The second change involves the girls' 110-yard low hurdles. Height of the hurdles has been raised from 30 to 33 inches, giving the girls a high hurdles race like the boys.

Following is a look at girls and boys track competition in area leagues:

GIRLS

City League

Ottawa Hills won the City League meet last year for the third straight time and finished fourth in the state. Despite graduation losses, the Indians retain enough power to rate as favorites with Creston, which finished second in the City last year.

Christian, third in the City a year ago, could field the best corps of distance runners and should take advantage of the new two-mile relay. The Eagles return all four members of their Class B state champion mile relay — junior Becky Ackerman, junior Diann Takens, senior Vicki Vaandrager and senior Kris Honderd.

Opening meets for the league season are on Thursday, April 12, at Houseman Field. Christian faces Ottawa Hills, Central takes on Union and West Catholic meets Catholic Central.

Ticket prices are \$2 for adults, \$1.50 for students. Ticket prices for the City League meet, slated for May 15 at Houseman, are \$2.50 for adults and \$2 for students.

All City League meets start with girls' field events at 3:30 p.m. and continue with girls' running events at 4:30. Boys' field events begin at 5 p.m., followed by running events at 7 p.m.

O-K Red

East Kentwood dethroned West Ottawa last year by winning both the dual meet and conference meet. Grandville finished third.

The Falcons and West Ottawa should be strong again and battle for the title. Sophomore Carol Ulsh of East Kentwood is back after winning the conference long jump, placing among the top two in both conference dashes and anchoring the winning 440 relay team.

East Kentwood's Kathy Thompson and West Ottawa's Kris Bale are two of the better distance runners.

Opening conference meets are on Thursday, April 19. Headlining the slate is Grandville against West Ottawa. East Kentwood meets Northview.

Conference meets will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

O-K White

In a rare break with tradition, Wyoming Park finished second to Zeeland last year. But the Vikings, fielding one of the area's deepest teams, aim to regain the crown this year.

Zeeland, 12th in the state in Class B, and Forest Hills Northern, fifth in Class C, have lost many of the strong individuals who generated those state-meet points.

Forest Hills Northern, which lost by only one point to Wyoming Park in a dual meet last year, should finish in the upper division. But the Huskies will probably be without sprinter Lisa Hardiman. State champion in the 100- and 200-meter dashes at last year's Class C meet, Hardiman was undecided about going out for this year's team as of last Thursday.

League meets start on April 17. At least six teams runs duals on the same day on Godwin's track, every Tuesday and Friday.

Girls' running events start at 4 p.m., followed by field events. Boys start with field events and finish with running events.

O-K Blue

Hudsonville won the league last year and should be favored again, along with Caledonia and Middleville. Caledonia tied the Eagles for first in the conference meet and finished second overall. Middleville, a one-point victor over Caledonia in the dual meet, was third overall.

Hudsonville has strength in the sprints, keyed by Lee Ann Smeenge, and power in the field events with discus thrower Robin Gryzen.

Because Hudsonville has had problems resurfacing its track, the Eagles will run all of their meets away this season. Highlighting openers on Monday, April 23, is a match between Caledonia and Hudsonville.

Tri-River

Returning champion Greenville hopes to place among the top three this season with its 40-member squad. High jumper Kristy Harrington hopes to improve on her eighth-place finish at last year's Class B state meet. She also is the defending conference 800-meter run champion.

Coopersville, laden with sprinters and jumpers, is a strong threat for the team championship. Coopersville won the dual meet title two years ago and Greenville won the conference meet.

Greenville runs against Coopersville during its spring break, so the Yellowjackets will have their hands full in defending its title.

Newaygo County Athletic Association

Tri-County has won every NCAA dual meet since

it began as a league sport in 1977. The Vikings have won or shared the last seven titles.

Morley-Stanwood, second overall last year, and Kent City, third overall, hope to challenge the Vikings this year. Kent City features one of the conference's leading individuals in Monica Shirey, returning conference champion in the 100 and 200 meters.

Newaygo figures to do plenty of damage at the conference meet at Tri-County.

Tri-County opens against Hesperia on Monday, April 9. Other conference meets open on Friday, April 16.

BOYS

City League

Based on early-season performances, Catholic Central will be the team to chase this season.

The Cougars, who won the City League meet last year, have posted victories in the Knights of Columbus Invitational at Aquinas College and Grand Rapids Press Invitational at Grand Valley State College. They also finished second in the Pat Patterson Relays at East Kentwood.

Ottawa Hills, last year's City League dual meet champion, figures to give the Cougars a stern test. The Indians have one of the best sprint corps in the state, buoyed by the presence of transfer student Elza Beard. In the last two years, he has won the City League 100- and 220-yard dashes for Creston.

Christian has three strong individuals in hurdler Chris Holsteg and distance men Todd Vandenberg and Greg Dykstra. The Eagles open against Ottawa Hills on Thursday, April 12.

O-K Red

East Kentwood won it last year, followed by West Ottawa, and those teams look to battle for the title again. East Kentwood, conference cross country champion, is strong in distance events while West Ottawa counters with a good weight events crew and conference champion hurdler Rodney Stevenson.

Grandville finished third in the league last year, but the Bulldogs were weakened by graduation losses. Twenty-three seniors have departed.

Opening conference meets are Thursday, April 19. Grandville meets West Ottawa, Rockford takes on Jenison, East Kentwood faces Northview and Forest Hills Central runs against East Grand Rapids.

East Kentwood travels to West Ottawa on May 8.

O-K White

Forest Hills Northern won both the dual meet and conference titles last year, followed by Wyoming Park, Wyoming Rogers and Godwin.

The same four teams will be in the hunt this year, with Forest Hills Northern fielding another potent team.

Godwin returns the conference's top sprinter, Andre Chillers, who won Class C regional titles in the 100- and 200-yard dashes as a sophomore.

Conference meets begin on Tuesday, April 17. Zeeland meets Kenowa Hills, Godwin faces Rogers, Forest Hills Northern takes on South Christian and Wayland meets Wyoming Park.

O-K Blue

Caledonia will be looking to extend its dynasty this season as the Scots gun for their sixth consecutive outright championship. Caledonia carries a 54-meet winning streak into the season.

All of the conference's individual champions have graduated, but Caledonia returns $\frac{3}{4}$ of three of its relay teams. Individually, the Scots return Mike Stallings, who was second in the conference 100 and 200, and Mark Ladousier, second in the mile.

Hudsonville and Middleville are expected to be Caledonia's toughest foes.

Dual meets open on Monday, April 23. A Hudsonville-Caledonia match, at Caledonia, should decide the conference dual meet title on that day.

Tri-River

Fremont won its second consecutive Tri-River title last year by coming on strong in the conference meet. Sparta had swept through the dual meet season undefeated, but Fremont, Greenville and Lowell placed ahead of the Spartans at the conference meet.

Before Fremont's two titles, Sparta won in each of the three previous years. Sparta has won nine of the 22 Tri-River track titles.

Opening day for conference dual meets is Thursday, April 19. Highlighting that day is a Fremont-Sparta dual at Sparta.

The final conference meet will be held at Lakewood on May 24.

Newaygo County Athletic Association

Kent City won the team title last year in record-breaking fashion with 181 points at the conference meet. But the Eagles will be pressed by White Cloud and Tri-County this year.

Kent City has won five of the last seven team titles. Tri-County interrupted that string with crowns in 1981 and 1982 and is the last NCAA team to beat Kent City in a dual meet.

League competition opens on Monday, April 16. Kent City hosts Grant, Tri-County is at Hesperia and White Cloud is at Newaygo. Morley-Stanwood has a first-round bye.

Holton does not field a track team.