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Honor Roll Meet appealing in many ways

By STEVEN WAITE
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Earning a spot on the State Journal Track Honor Roll is, admittedly, one of the top yearly endeavors for area prep athletes.

It's attraction comes from the satisfaction gained by competing against the area's best. And a berth on the Honor Roll usually results in an opportunity to test those skills in the State Journal-Sexton Honor Roll Meet of Track Champions.

For some, Wednesday's 10th running of that event at Memorial Stadium, beginning at 6 p.m., will be the biggest meet of the year.

"It's my favorite meet of the whole year," said Everett High's Sherry Tree, who is expected to defend her 400-meter dash title Wednesday. "You want to win at the Honor Roll Meet to prove you're the best. You can't be satisfied with a line in the paper that says you are."

Tree will be the top seed in the 400 — thanks to a mark of 58.6 seconds — and will more than likely anchor the Vikings' No. 1-seeded 800 and 1,600 relay teams.

Ava Udvadia, a teammate of Tree's, enjoys the Honor Roll Meet for a different reason.

"You're out there for yourself, you don't have to worry about letting the team down," said Udvadia, who will run only the 1,600 Wednesday — an event she has run in 5:03.9 this year, nearly 14 seconds faster than No. 2 qualifier Missy Malone of DeWitt.

By limiting herself to just one event, in preparation for Saturday's Class A meet at Flint, Udvadia will pass up a chance to win her second consecutive 3,200 crown.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is Mason's Susie Price, who is expected to compete in four Meet of Champions' events — the 100 intermediate and 300 low hurdles, and the Bulldogs' 800 and 1,600 relays.

"The Honor Roll is something I think about at the very beginning of the season . . . you want to be a part of it any and every way you can," said Price, valedictorian of Mason's 1985 graduating class.

"It provides you with an opportunity to run against probably the best competition, as a whole, you'll face all year. If you're good enough to be invited, you want the challenge the Honor Roll Meet presents. Win or lose, you're going to get good results."

Kent Gartside of DeWitt concurs.

"It's a meet where you can have a lot of people push you toward a good time, and everyone who's in this meet wants to be pushed," said the junior distance specialist, who'll attempt to uphold his No. 1 spot in the 800. "Winning is nice, but I think everyone's deepest desire is to get their personal best (time).

"If you achieve only that, it's still gratifying and you have nobody but your competition to thank."

Sportsmanship like Gartside's is another attractive aspect of the Meet of Champions, said Charlotte's Jennifer Busch, a discus and shot put specialist.

"Sure, everyone is out to win — it's a different class of competition than you're used to — but that doesn't stop you from helping one another out," said the three-time Meet of Champions qualifier and 1[…] discus champion. "It's a learning experience, one th[…] makes you feel good."

The Meet of Champions also has a positive aff[…] on coaches.

"It gives state meet qualifiers one final tune- against stiff competition," said Ron Barr, whose […] beaten Everett boys are considered the favorite […] win the Class A title.

"A mistake Wednesday won't hurt you as much […] it will Saturday. You hate to see any mistakes, but there are any, you can recognize them and, hopeful[ly] correct them in time to get the needed results […] Saturday.

"There's also a psyche-factor. The kids get up f[or] the Honor Roll meet. If they're successful, th[…] they're really up for Saturday. If they're not, th[…] tend to give that extra amount of effort necessary [to] win.

"It's a great meet. I can't think of anyone w[ho] doesn't like it."

Listed are the qualifiers for Wednesday's 10th annual State Journal-Sexton Honor Roll Meet of Champions at Memorial Stadium.

The top eight individuals in each event qualify to compete in the Meet of Champions. However, all honored individuals will receive a certificate, or certificates, signifying their 1985 track and field achievements. Alternates are encouraged to attend, and may compete if scratches occur.

Coaches presently aware of scratches are asked to call the State Journal (377-1068) between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. Tuesday, so that alternates can be informed of their competitive status.

Field events for the Meet of Champions will commence at 6 p.m. Running events are scheduled to begin at 7 p.m.

Tickets can be purchased at the door. All seats are $2.

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