

## SWIFT, FASTEST



SPECIAL TO THE NEWS • MICHAEL CURLETT

Ypsilanti's Wendell Faria, an exchange student from Suriname, would just "go and run" at home. Now he runs for a state title.

# Suriname r speedster

■ Exchange student Wendell Faria hopes to keep the boys' sprint championships in Ypsilanti for another season.

By PAT SCHUTTE

NEWS SPECIAL WRITER

Ypsilanti's Wendell Faria used to be a quarter-mile, until some of his teammates urged him to run shorter sprints.

He's become the area's quickest study in the fastest events.

Kercheval Patterson brought the 100- and 200-meter titles to the Ypsilanti trophy case last year in his senior season, and Faria hopes to keep them on the same shelf the next two years.

"I have the sprint in my body," says Faria with a smile.

A native of Suriname — a small country on the north central coast of South America — Faria, an exchange student, has become the talk of the area sprinting scene.

At the Class A regional meet at Belleville Friday, Faria dominated the 100-meter dash, winning by three-tenths of a second, despite pulling a groin muscle in the process. Then, in pain, he ran a leg in the 400-meter relay and capped the day with a come-from-behind win in the 200.

Mention the Braves' No. 1 sprinter to his coach, Levi Simpson, and you get an emphatic nod.

"Wendell's a real positive influence on the kids," said Simpson.

Faria has lost just once this season. That came in the 200 at Ypsilanti's first meet, when Faria was running for the first time on an ankle that he turned playing basketball. The ankle healed and Faria avenged that loss.

His personal bests this year are a 10.48 in the 100 and a 21.54 in the 200. Both would have won him state titles in last year's state finals.

Faria, sitting on the infield at Belleville, was impressed with the number of athletes at the regional — the largest track meet he'd run in to date.

"We had no track," he said when asked how good he was in Suriname. "Just a couple of us would go out and run."

But he honed his running talent playing soccer. Coaches note the junior's effortless, textbook approach, and fans marvel at his speed.

Faria has never experienced a state meet, but he's well aware of what's going on and what his goal is.

"My goal is to win it," he said. "Last year Kercheval won it, and I want to keep the title at Ypsi for the next two years."

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