

Prep hurdler wants to go out in style

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TIMES SPORTS WRITER

Kelly Walker is already the best girls hurdler to compete in The Bay City Times Classic.

But the Times Classic may not have seen the best of Walker.

"I've had some good times there, and I would like to do even better Friday," said Walker, the Standish-Sterling senior who has dominated the hurdles at the area all-star meet.

Walker, the Classic champion in both the 100 hurdles and 300 hurdles for the past two years, owns the meet record in each event.

She set the 100-meter mark of 15.16 seconds as a sophomore in 1998 at Bangor John Glenn and last year, at Bay City Western, broke the meet record in the 300 meters (45.43).

Walker's quest to add to her Times Classic legacy is one of the top storylines at the 13th annual area high school meet, which takes place Friday at the Bangor John Glenn track facility. Field events begin at 4:30 p.m., running preliminaries at 5 p.m. and running finals at 6 p.m.

"Kelly is one of those special athletes who come around only once in a long while," said Standish-Sterling coach track coach Gary Hagenbuch.

"She's not only a great athlete, she's a great person and you couldn't ask for a harder working young lady."

Walker acknowledges that she has gotten off to a slow - for her - start this season but recent performances suggest she is in for a strong finish to her prep career.

She took first place in the long jump and both hurdles events and anchored the Panthers' 1,600 relay that finished second Saturday at the Division III regional at Clare.

Her top times in the hurdles are the best in the area this spring and she is also the area leader in the long jump by 3/4 inch over Pinconning sophomore Annie Diener.

Not bad for an athlete who competes in track during her "other" sport. Basketball is Walker's first love, and the former all-stater is headed to the University of Toledo next fall on a roundball scholarship.

Walker was an instant success in track and, in particular, the hurdles. She qualified for the Class B state meet in the 100 hurdles as a freshman and in both hurdles events each of the next two years.

"In her first meet as a freshman she three-stepped," said former SSC track coach Howard Colberg. "Not many kids can do that right away, but she was that strong of an athlete.

"She would play basketball with our varsity team as a seventh grader and she high-jumped 5-2 in junior high. There isn't much she can't do," added Colberg."

"The 100 is my favorite event to run because its over quickly," said Walker. "But I liked the hurdles from the start. Its a challenging event."

Walker is one of five 1999 champions to return to the Times Classic on Friday, joining Alicia Russell of Beaverton in the shot put and discus, Jaime Fluegge of Cass City in the 100 dash and 200 dash, Heather Jahr of Bay City Western in the high jump and Meagan Strohkirch of Gladwin in the 1,600-meter run.

"I always like running at the Bay City meet,"said Walker. "There's good competition all the way around and there is always a good field, so you have to be at your best."

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