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SPORTS PREP STATE FINALS

MICK MCCABE RELAYS A TALE OF FRIENDSHIP AND RUNNING

Henry, Green push each other to a 1-2 finish

By PERRY A. FARRELL
FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER

KENTWOOD — As they took their places in the blocks moments before the start of the 100-meter final, Tyrone Green looked at Jon Henry in the lane next to him and said: "One, two."

Hall nodded and responded: "One, two."

One-two — that has always been the way for the East Kentwood sprinters.

Henry, a senior, entered Saturday's state meet seeded fifth, and Henry, a junior, was No. 15, so one-two didn't seem too realistic. They were competing against Detroit Cass Tech sensation Dior Mathis, the favorite.

"We heard about him, but we don't pay too much attention to the seeds," Henry said. "We're just worried about us pushing each other to get better."

That has been the way it has been for three years now — Henry pushing Green and Green pushing Henry.

When the gun sounded, the East Kentwood pair were off. They quickly pulled away from the pack and just like they predicted, finished one-two.

The only question was which was one and which was two? It took the officials several minutes before they revealed that Henry was one and Green was two.

That was a shock because it was the first time Henry had beaten Green. Ever.

"I was surprised because my teammate had consistently been on me in dual meets and individual meets all year. If you added up all the dual meets, he's the best champion."

Henry finished in 10.89 seconds, and Greene was timed at 10.96. He handled the loss much better than anyone could have imagined.

"I lost to a teammate," Green said with a sheg. "It's all about good sportsmanship between us. My best competition is up at practice. It's basically the same thing but with a different outcome."

They both had an even better race left in them when they helped Kentwood win the 4-by-100 relay, in the process of helping the Falcons claim the Division 1 team title.

But this time they were not one-two. It was one-four.

Henry run the first leg of the relay and Green was the one entrusted with the anchor leg.

But after Henry beat Green in the 100 final, shouldn't he have replaced Green as the last runner?

"Just because I edged him out here doesn't mean anything," Henry insisted. "That's my boy; we're friends first before track. That was my buddy there. That is his spot in the team."

Henry staked Kentwood to a lead, and the next two Kentwood runners increased the lead before Green took the baton for the final 100 meters.

Green could have coasted home, but he didn't. He took the handoff and appeared to explode down the final straightaway as Kentwood finished with a state record 42.4.

"Everything that we work for was right there," Green said. "This was my last meet in my high school career. I wanted to end it on a good note."

It ended on a championship note for both him and his teammates, and Green insisted it didn't bother him in the least to finish second to Henry in the 100.

"Actually, I was happy, I swear," Green said. "He's a young asset to the team. We've been going at it all year and it's been fun. He's ahead of my college career ahead and he's a junior. He deserves it. He's been working hard all year. It just proves that the days I did slack he worked hard and so he edged me out."

Girls tennis

Midland Dow earns first state title

No. 4 singles nail-biter puts Chargers over top

By PERRY A. FARRELL
FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER

MIDLAND — Jennifer Liu knew what her opponent Katie Close didn't want to know.

The sophomores were in a marathon singles match at No. 4 with their teams tied and the Division 1 girls state tennis final hanging in the balance.

Ann Arbor Pioneer's Liu, who was battling a 105-degree temperature, had won the first set, 6-2. Midland Dow's Close took the second set, 7-6 (7-5), and the match, which was played at Midland High School, ended prior because of rain, was tied, 6-6, in the third set.

"I didn't want to know," Close said of the importance of her match. "I practice and play here all the time. Tiebreaks are my thing, so when it went to the tiebreaker I felt really comfortable."

Close won the third set, 7-6 (9-6), to earn an individual state title and clinch Midland Dow's first team title with 30 points to Pioneer's 29.

"We had a couple of chances to close out the match," Pioneer coach Tom Pullen said. "I give their player a lot of credit. She really played well. The pressure was on her."

Within minutes of each other, Pioneer won titles at No. 3 doubles (Vivian Hance and Nora Rowman) and No. 1 doubles (Sarah Kennedy and Emily Paugh).

"I was serving and I saw them down there celebrating and I think I lost the point," Paugh said. "I was happy for them, but I lost focus for a minute. I knew we needed to win so I tried to stay aggressive."

Dow junior Andrews won at No. 2 singles, Rochester's Kelsey Dancers was at No. 1 and West Bloomfield's Morgan Taylor won at No. 3.

DIVISION 2: At Kalamazoo Colleges, Grand Rapids Northwestern Christian won all the four doubles matches and No. 4 singles for easily secure its fourth consecutive state title with 28 points.

Katherine Liu won at No. 4 singles for Northern, which finished with 25 points. Birmingham Marian, on the strength of Bailey Paradise's state title win at No. 2 singles, finished third with 24 points.

Shelby Parcha and Maeve Hallstrom won at No. 1 doubles for Northern, and Nikita Kotler and Kaur Maan and Tacky Minnort and Sarah Holden won at No. 2 and 3 doubles, respectively.

Elise Mitching and Maddie Cassidy teamed to take No. 1 doubles for Traverse City Central, which finished with 23 points, during Cindy Lakowski's Maggie Hampton won at No. 3 singles and Farmington's Victoria Anderson won at No. 2.

DIVISION 3: At Michigan State, East Grand Rapids won the top three singles flights in straight sets, and won No. 1 and 4 doubles for the Pirates to earn its first state title since 2000.

Amanda Wickman, Molly Wickman and Elsie Silver were singles winners for the Pioneers, who topped runners-up Chelsea and Kalamazoo Christian in the team race. EGR finished with 24 points. Doubles partners Holly Boys and Carley Sillman and Beth Wickman and Molly Hazle won at Nos. 3 and 4, respectively.

Country Day's Annabel Karnak won at No. 4 singles, and Allegan, which finished fourth with 23 points, took No. 1 (Shelby Schulz-Bruce) and No. 2 (Rachel Cole-Hannah Schulz) doubles.

DIVISION 4: At Jackson, Ann Arbor Greenhills won only one individual title, but reached the finals in three more flights to win a hotly contested team title with 29 points. Runner-up honed by Grand Rapids Northwestern Christian with 26, Kalamazoo Christian (25) and Kalamazoo Hackett (24) finished second and third.

Greenhills' Karen Gardner won the second No. 1 singles, Hackett had winners at No. 2 (Kathleen Kwaskiewicz) and No. 3 (Lauren Kamins) and Northfrontier's Madeline McGregory won at No. 4.

Ashley Bender and Allison Webster won at No. 1 doubles and Sydney Batts and Callie Carlson won at No. 4 for Kalamazoo Christian. Williamston duos Erin Simonds and Audrey Wilson and Ashley Wilson and Sarah Graham won at Nos. 2 and 3, respectively.

BONNIE? PERRY A. FARRELL: 313-222-2085 OR PFARRELL@FREEPRESS.COM; FREE PRESS SPORTS STAFF CONTRIBUTED.

Boys and girls track

Detroit Renaissance's Ashlee Abraham, left, and East Lansing's Hannah Fitzpatrick anchor the Division 2 400 relay Saturday.

Linton's day boosts Romulus

Renaissance's Abraham stellar in Division 2

By MICK MCCABE
FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER

KENTWOOD — The girls Division 1 state team championship came down to what happened after Christienne Linton grabbed the baton on the final leg of the 1,600-meter relay.

"We knew once Linton got it, things would be pretty much sealed," said Romulus coach Wade Cook.

Linton took the baton in second place, and by the time she was finished Romulus had its first state title and she had a hand in every one of its points.

Romulus totaled 38 points, Rockford was second at 37, and three-time defending champ Ann Arbor Pioneer was third with 36 points.

Linton, who signed with Ohio State, was the female performer of the day, winning the long jump, the 300 hurdles and the 1,600 relay and finishing second in the 100 hurdles for 38 ½ points.

After winning the 1,600 relay, Linton lay on the artificial turf for several minutes before being told of Romulus' team victory.

"It wasn't all about me," Linton said of her success on the contrary, I prepared. Before the relay I told the girls to keep doing what we've been doing all year."

Pioneer has won 16 girls titles and has either won or finished second every year since 1994. Detroit Mumford had won the two previous titles before Pioneer's last three.

"We've been following Mumford, Pioneer for years," Cook said. "They're two excellent programs. It's somewhat of a surprise. We don't have a lot of numbers. Pioneer's got a lot of numbers. They got second and third and we knew we became Rockford was going to come because they've got pole vaulters and things of that nature.

"We needed a good day out of Linton and the rest of the runners pulled together."

MORE GIRLS DIVISION 1: Rockford junior Ashley Ryan finished second in the 100 and the national stage where she became the first girl in state history to sale sault 13 feet in winning the Division 1 vault.

Her vault is believed to be the fifth best in nation.

"I knew I had the potential to do it," Brinkmeier said. "I was a little nervous today. I had a little bit of fear in my mind. I felt a lot of pressure on me, but I had faith in myself."

BOYS DIVISION 1: East Kentwood dominated the track meet, totaling 79 points. Heritage Northern was second with 34, and West Detroit Catholic Central was third (33).

DIVISION 2: East Lansing girls edged Dowagiac, 36-35, to win the team title, but Detroit Renaissance's Ashlee Abraham stole the show.

Abraham won the 100 in 12.50 seconds, won the 200 (25.46) and anchored the winning 400 relay team that included Hannah Lerrod Jones and Tiara Heard (48.12).

East Lansing won the 800 relay in 1.45.49 with Hannah Fitzpatrick, Marissa Flanigan, Alexandra Lee and Victoria Lee.

The Hamtiltonians ran away with the team title with 42 points to Williamston's 19. Troy Snellier won the 300 hurdles (38.83) for Williamston and Ryan Hoffman won the 1,600 (4:14). Matt Tuck, David Pramik and Zach Hovergnat) and the 1,600 relay (Dakota Sain, Snellier, Pramik, Michael Hoffman).

DIVISION 3: Allen boys topped Allendale, 36-34, to win the team title. Allen won the 400 and 800 relays and Todd Atkinson's was in the 200 dash.

Allendale's Zach Hills broke both his own Division 3 records in repeating as champion in the 1,600 (4:19.09) and 3,200 (9:37.09).

On the girls side, Frankenmuth topped Bancroft Central, 62-48, for the title.

Frankenmuth's Ashley Ryan (Frankenmuth's No. winning the 200 (26.32).

DIVISION 4: Pattersville won both the boys and girls meets.

Larry Jackson (1,600) and Collin Ward (800) were individual titles for the Pattersville boys, who won the 1,600 relay.

The Pattersville girls won the 800 relay and 1,600 relay.

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jeffhollobaugh
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