

SportsWeekend

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► State Track and Field Meet

Busy Knight skies to 3rd title

Apollo pole vaulter wins dramatically

By Mark Mathis
Messenger-Inquirer

LEXINGTON — Andy Knight was a busy young man Friday.

The Apollo High senior had to run qualifying races in the 100 and 200 meters while try-

ing to concentrate on becoming the first pole vault three-peater in Kentucky high school track and field history.

Once he got the 100 and 200 prelims out of the way, Knight settled in and won his third Class 3-A pole vault championship. He went 14 feet, 6 inches for the victory.

It was not without drama. Knight was pursued relentlessly by a familiar foe, Daviess County's Jason Wilgus, who came in second for the second consecutive year.

Knight was also hounded by a tight schedule.

The pole vault competition was in progress while he ran the 100, finishing fourth in his heat with a time of 11.39 seconds, good enough to advance to today's finals. Back at the pole vault pit, the bar was raised to 13 feet before Knight entered.

After he missed twice at 13-6 — Wilgus made the height on his second try — Knight ran over to the 200. He was fourth in his heat of that event, too, in 22.62.

When he returned to the pit, the pole vault competition was held up for several minutes, waiting for Knight to change shoes and get back in focus.

With a mini-primal scream — a Knight trademark late in this competition — he raced down the runway, took flight and cleared the bar with room to spare.

"That's the first time I've done all that in a row," the University of Tennessee-bound

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Apollo's Andy Knight won the Class 3-A pole vault title for the third straight year, vaulting 14 feet, 6 inches to outduel Daviess County's Jason Wilgus.

Cathy Clark, Messenger-Inquirer

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Boys: Knight wins pole vault in dramatic fashion

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Knight said. "After the 200, I had to come right over and I was up."

The bar then went to 14 feet, and Knight took control, clearing the height on his first vault. The pressure was then on Wilgus, who missed his first two tries at 14.

Wilgus, a junior, hit the bar going over on his third try at 14, but after bouncing on the standards several times, it stayed put.

"I usually do my best work when I'm under pressure," Wilgus said. "Andy gave me a lot of pressure today."

It turned up several notches when the height reached 14-6 and Knight went over on his first try. Wilgus missed three straight, and the competition was over.

A lot of factors played in the late afternoon intensity on the Shively Track at the University of Kentucky. Some mental, some mechanical.

"I'm in between poles, and it was hard to decide which one to use," Knight said. "I stayed with the one I used on the last attempt at 13-6, and it carried me through."

That he made history hadn't totally sunk in as Knight packed up to leave. The relief was evident, though.

"It was more a mental struggle this year to defeat all the things going against me," said Knight, who's nursed a shoulder problem and hasn't practiced a great deal this spring.

The day wasn't easy for Owensboro High School's Robin Handley, either.

The defending Class 2-A high jump champion was hampered by a bruised heel he suffered during last weekend's regional meet and went out of the 3-A high jump competition at 6-2. He cleared 6-6 last year. St. Xavier's Pat Farnan won Friday with a jump of 6-11.

"I couldn't cut as good (on takeoff) and I couldn't push off too hard," Handley said.

Handley did make the final eight in the 300 intermediate hurdles. He led his heat until the last hurdle, then missed a step and almost stopped before the last hurdle. He hopped over it to finish second (40.41).

Daviess County used a third-place finish in the 3,200 relay and Wilgus' second-place finish to score 14 points. The Panthers are two behind 3-A leader Louisville St. Xavier, which has 16.

Steve Bair, Clint Heady, Charlie Moore and Jon Eriksen covered the relay distance in 8:09.75.

Nathan Guinn represents Hancock County in today's 2-A 300 intermediate hurdle finals. The sophomore was fourth in his heat (41.97).

The following athletes didn't qualify for today's finals:

Jeff Nichols of Owensboro in the 3-A 100, and OHS' 400 and 1,600 relay teams; Grayson County's Jimmy Russell in the 400; Ohio County's Rick Murphy in the shot put; and Kyle Moore of Butler County in the 2-A 400.