



Daniel Willette, left, and Kennard Plummer lead their team into the state meet.

Plummer's Strategy Would Make Positive Thinking Crowd Proud

By JEROME RICHARD
Chronicle Sports Writer

Kennard Plummer's strategy for winning the standing long jump would do the positive-thinking, preaching crowd proud.

"I look at the back of the sand pit and try to reach it," the 11-year-old Plummer said. "That's what I go for, but sometimes I end up short. I used to look at the tape measure, but that didn't help much. I know I can't get there (to the back of the sand pit), but if you try, you'll still do well."

Plummer's strategy has served him well. He won the 11-12-year-old standing long jump with a leap of 6 feet, 10 inches on June 30 at the regionals of the Hershey Youth Track Program. The victory earned him a spot in the July 15 state finals in Raleigh where a victory will send him to Hershey, Pa., for the national tournament.

"The state meet is a big meet with a lot of people that are as good as me," said Plummer, who was second in the 100-meter dash at the regional with a time of 13.9 seconds. "That is the meet to do your best in so you can go to the nationals."

Plummer will be joined at the state meet by teammate Daniel Willette, who won the 11-12-year-old softball throw at the regional with a throw of 153 feet.

Willette credits his winning throw to "using all my arm and a couple of tips Mr. (Anderson) Noble

gave me." Looking ahead to the state meet, Willette said, "I'm just going to try my best. It would mean a lot to win."

Plummer and Willette will be joined in Raleigh by 33 other regional competitors from the Winston-Salem area.

Noble, who works for the Winston-Salem Parks Department and is the regional director of the Hershey program, is enthusiastic about Winston-Salem's chances for a state championship.

"We have a chance to win it all," he said, pinning his hopes on several individuals, including Albert Gainer, Cassandra Penn, Karlton Jones and Justin Meritt. The 4x100

relay team of Walter Funderburk, Michael Rawlins, Anthony Nicholas and Rayford Wilkins will also participate in the meet. "Cassandra has been to the state meet at least three times, so I'm expecting great things from her," Noble said.

Like Plummer, Noble has a strategy for winning.

"The top five from our seven-state region go to the nationals. That means that a second-place finisher in Florida may go to the nationals instead of the winner from Virginia if his time is better," Noble explained. "That's why it is so important for the kids to do their best. I tell them they aren't competing against individuals, but against time."

Long-Running Track Program Is Good for Kids

The Hershey Youth Track Program is a 19-year-old event sponsored by the Hershey Chocolate Co. The program started in Hershey, Pa., the headquarters of Hershey Chocolate, as a local event before spreading nationwide.

Male and female youngsters from age 9 to 14 are eligible to compete in the program, which groups competitors in age categories 9-10, 11-12 and 13-14. Competition is held at local, regional and state levels with the

national championships held in Hershey.

"If you qualify for the nationals, Hershey provides transportation and lodging and has a wide range of activities for the participants, including a tour of the chocolate factory," said Anderson Noble, the regional director of the Hershey program and an employee of the Winston-Salem Parks & Recreation Department. "It's a very good program for the kids."

— Jerome Richard



Harold Dunovant teaches the finer points of the golf swing.

Gettin' Into the Swing

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McClain, who figures if he can get kids interested when they are young, there is a chance to teach much more than golf.

"Inner-city kids don't care what you know or who you are until you show them you care," he said. "Once they know you care, their minds open up like you wouldn't believe."

When those minds open, Dunovant pours in discipline and love in large doses using kindness, sternness, praise and encouragement.

"Mr. Dunovant's rapport with the kids is outstanding," McClain said. "Once they are exposed to Mr. Dunovant and his enthusiasm, they are hooked. He is a wizard with the kids."

The crusty Dunovant, he of the rough exterior and marshmallow heart, says kids only need a chance.

"I'm pleased with how the kids have adapted to the game and the swing. They seem like they have been playing for years," he said. "These kids have more intelligence than we give them credit for."

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