

NCSSM Track Team Finishes Third at States

LANCE HARDEN

The NCSSM Men's Track Team concluded their record-breaking season with the best finish in school history since moving from the North Carolina High School Athletic Association's (NCHSAA) 1A Division to the North Carolina Independent Schools Athletic Association's (NCISAA) 3A Division. With a team score of 78 points, the Unicorns finished third in the State Meet last weekend behind TISAC-champion Ravenscroft (109) and the hosts from Charlotte Country Day (90).

The firm, rubberized surface at Charlotte Country Day produced many fast times during the course of the two-day meet, as the Unis shattered two

ishing fourth in a season-best time of 8:32.06. Every member of the team ran their personal-best 800-meter time in the race, and the total time was over twelve seconds faster than their performance at the conference meet. Later in the evening, Wolpert and Harden competed in the finals of the 3200-meter run. After leading the race for the opening laps, Wolpert latched onto the heels of the leaders to finish third in a school-record time of 9:45.60, bettering his personal record (PR) time by nearly 15 seconds. Harden also placed in the event, finishing fourth in a season-best time of 9:55.45, a significant improvement from the 10:11.7 that he ran to win the conference meet.

On Saturday, the Unis continued their success in the

him second place at the conference meet, it still earned two all-important team points for NCSSM.

Owolabi quickly redeemed himself in the finals of the 110-meter high hurdles, the first running event of Saturday's meet. He ran a PR of 14.91 seconds to win the event and defeat his long-time nemesis Ben Jenkins of Ravenscroft. Jenkins beat Owolabi in the high hurdles at the conference meet in a controversial race that saw Owolabi fall in the first 30 meters. Owolabi's winning time was within a hundredth of a second of the school record.

About forty minutes after NCSSM won its first state championship of the day, the 4 x 200-meter relay team of Dean Fox, Daniel Watford, Marsalis Smith, and Mark Reidy set out to defend its state crown of 2004. Both Fox and Watford were members of the 2004 team that won last year's race in a school-record time from the slow heat. After a valiant effort, the team finished third in 1:34.10, four-hundredths of a second off the previous meet record and half a second faster than their school-record time from a year ago.

Two more school records were in jeopardy during the 1600-meter run and 4 x 100-meter relay that followed the 4 x 200-meter relay. Wolpert ran a 4:30.62 in the 1600, a PR by more than 7 seconds, for fifth place, coming within a second of M. Cunningham's 1993 time of 4:29. Moments later, the 4 x 100 team of Owolabi, Smith, Watford, and Fox finished third in 44.75, achingly close to their school-record time of 44.57 that they ran to finish second in the conference meet.

Only forty minutes after running on the relay team, Owolabi was back on the track in his attempt to win a second state championship, the 4 x 100 team of Owolabi, Smith, Watford, and Fox finished third in 44.75, achingly close to their school-record time of 44.57 that they ran to finish second in the conference meet. Again facing the formidable Jenkins, Owolabi led the 300-meter intermediate hurdles wire-to-wire, winning in a time of 39.68. This time was slightly slow-



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Isaac Owolabi jumps towards his last victory at NCSSM.

er than the school-record 39.20 that Owolabi ran to win the conference meet. That mark stands as the fourth-fastest time in the state of NC, regardless of classification (public schools included), this year.

Owolabi's second hurdles victory gave the team score another 10 points, and the Unis now had an opportunity to do something special. Just before the men's 4 x 400-meter relay

teams.

The NCSSM team controlled their fate as much as possible by finishing first in the slow heat in a time of 3:38.74. This was the Unis fastest time of the year by over 8 seconds, and it came within a second of breaking the school record, held by the 1997 relay team which included Coach Aryano Bush. The entire team watched anxiously as the



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Jody Brown-Harkey runs for NCSSM in the relay competition.

school records and came within a second of breaking four more. Coupled with the two school records set at the TISAC Conference Meet last week, the NCSSM Men's Track Team has established four new school records this season.

The 4 x 800-meter relay team of Luke Lankford, Lance Harden, Kyle Wolpert, and Nick Cook set the tone in the first race of the day Friday, fin-

inals of the field events. Josh Judkins placed fifth in the discus with a personal-best heave of 115 feet and 5 inches. The week before, he was the runner-up in the conference meet with a throw of 106 feet and 4.5 inches. Meanwhile, on the runway, Isaac "Mr. Everything" Owolabi jumped 39 feet and 7 inches to finish seventh in the triple jump. While this mark was slightly shorter than the jump that gave



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Unicorns sprint to the finish line.

team of Derrell Vann, Wolpert, Reidy, and Cook came onto the track for the last event of the meet, the stadium announcer revealed that the Unis were in third place with 73 points, but they were closely followed by the Chargers of Providence Day (70) and the Furies of Forsyth Country Day (65.5). The Furies came into the final race with the fastest seed time and the title of defending champs in the event. The NCSSM coaches and athletes speculated that the Uni relay team needed to finish sixth or better in order to earn three points and ensure their third-place finish overall. However, the Unis were running in the first, slower heat and wouldn't have the head-to-head competition of the best

Furies predictably won the second and final heat of the relay. When the announcer read off the top 6 times moments later starting with the winners, the Unis held their breath in hopeful anticipation. Fortunately, NCSSM's time stood up for fourth place overall in the event, giving the Unis just enough points to finish third as a team.

NCSSM had many other individuals place (finishing in the top eight and therefore scoring team points) in the meet. They include: Alan Walker (eighth, 110-meter hurdles), Fox (fifth, 100-meter dash), Harden (seventh, 1600-meter run), Cook (fifth, 400-meter dash), Vann (eighth, 400-meter dash), and Reidy (sixth, 200-meter dash).



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NCSSM's Track Team will lose its current senior members next season.