

# North Brunswick's Ballard Springs Into State Record Book

BY DOUG RUTTER

North Brunswick's Maduka Ballard, known for his high-flying dunks on the basketball court, has parlayed his leaping ability into a state record.

The high school senior set the regular-season high jump record last Thursday when he cleared 7 feet, 2 inches, during a track meet in Leland.

Rick Strunk, director of the N.C. High School Athletic Association, said the state didn't have a regular-season record for high jump. So now it belongs to a Scorpion.

Ballard, whose previous best competitive jump was 6 feet, 8 inches, said it was just one of those days.

"I never did it in practice. I never even came close," he said Monday. "I had a good day that day. The weather was good. The wind wasn't blowing. The sun was out. It was a good day."

The state championship meet high jump record is 7 feet, 1 inch. Darrin Moore of J.H. Rose High School in Greenville set that mark in 1987.

Dothel Edwards of Athens, Ga., set the national high school record of 7 feet, 5 1/4 inches, in 1984.

Ballard's leap would have tied for second best in the nation last year, according to Strunk, who chairs the National Records Committee.

North Brunswick Track Coach Bob Grimes believes Ballard is the first Scorpion to set a track and field record.

Tammy Ballard, who ran track at North several years ago, came close when she won the state 100-meter dash in a time of 12.2 seconds.

High jumpers get three attempts to clear each height, but Ballard didn't need them last week. He didn't miss until he got to 7 feet, 3 inches, where he hit the bar on his only two attempts.

Grimes said about 100 people witnessed the last few jumps. The crowd, mostly North Brunswick teammates and competitors from South Brunswick and Whiteville, flocked to the high jump pit as Ballard made his assault.

"I was standing at the other end of the track, and I could hear them



MADUKA BALLARD clears the high jump bar with ease during practice Monday. The North Brunswick senior set a state record last week when he cleared 7 feet, 2 inches.

STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

clapping every time he cleared it," Grimes said. "He likes that. He responds to the crowd."

Ballard admitted the competitors-turned-spectators got him fired up. "Everybody was hyped up," he recalled. "It seemed like the whole school was standing around watching."

The 6-foot-2-inch Ballard only started running track last spring and said his best jump of the season was 6 feet, 7 inches.

He won the conference high jump with a leap of 6 feet, 2 inches, even after spraining an ankle and changing the foot that he uses to push off.

Coach Grimes said Ballard's natural jumping ability has gotten him to 6 feet, 10 inches, this year and now he's working more on form.

"He realizes from this point on his gains are going to come through leg strength and technique," Grimes said.

Besides the high jump, Ballard

competes in the 200-meter run and is a member of North's 400-meter relay team.

The coach says participating in those events will only help Ballard's high jumping. Running will strengthen his legs, which means Ballard should be even stronger for the key events at the end of the season.

Grimes said his high jumper has "Olympic potential" and will have three chances this spring to qualify

for the Olympic trials in June.

To qualify, Ballard will have to clear at least 7 feet, 4 inches, in a track and field competition sanctioned by The Athletics Congress.

There's one coming up May 2 at Wake Forest University. Ballard also will have a chance to qualify at the regional and state championships later in May.

"Realistically, he has a shot at it if he jumps well," Grimes said. "He

has the raw ability and we're working on the technique."


If Ballard doesn't qualify for the Olympic trials this summer, there's always 1996. In the meantime, a college scholarship isn't out of the question.

"He's a good student, and he works hard" Grimes said. "Guys that can jump 6-6 are a dime a dozen, but 7 feet is a different atmosphere."

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## Whiteville Netters Top South Cougars

Whiteville posted a 7-2 win over host South Brunswick last Wednesday to remain unbeaten in Waccamaw 2-A Conference boys' tennis.

The Cougars' match at West Brunswick was postponed Monday due to windy conditions. It will be made up today (Thursday).

Singles: Shelburne (W) def. Yount, 6-0, 7-6; Folding (SB) def. Young, 6-0, 1-6, 6-4; Eichman (W) def. Williams, 6-0, 6-1; Black (SB) def. Arrington, 2-6, 6-3, 7-5; Nicholson (W) def. Short, 6-1, 6-1; Demetrius (W) def. Poulk, 7-6, 6-1.

Doubles: Shelburne and Arrington (W) def. Yount and Black, 8-2; Young and Eichman (W) def. Folding and Williams, 8-5; Nicholson and Hudson (W) def. Poulk and West, 8-4.

## West Tennis Team Beats East Bladen

West Brunswick's tennis team beat East Bladen 5-4 last Wednesday to improve to 3-1 in the Waccamaw 2-A Conference and 3-2 overall.

The Trojans' home match against South Brunswick Monday was postponed until today (Thursday) due to windy conditions.

West Brunswick was to host Whiteville Wednesday, and will resume play April 27 with a home match against Fairmont following Easter break.

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