

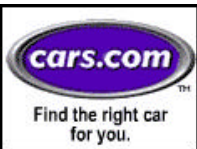


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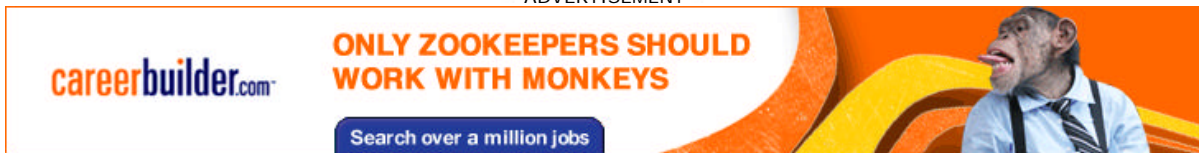
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## Lex vets back Four qualifiers set serious tone

By Jon Spencer  
News Journal

It was easy to spot the Lexington contingent in the stands at last year's state track and field meet. They were the ones wearing matching tie-dyed shirts brighter than the sun.

This weekend, the gaudy shirts are in the closet or the dustbin or wherever they landed.

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"We're not making any fashion statements this year," coach Jay Schmidt said. "We're going down with a job in mind. All four of our qualifiers have paid the price to get there."

Lexington produced an area-high four state medals last spring and two of the recipients -- Ben Fithian in the 800-meter run and Val Wert in the discus -- return to Columbus. Those two seniors will be joined by senior Heidi Gross in the 3,200 and junior Alex Boyd in the pole vault.

Schmidt feels blessed to have four survivors from arguably the toughest Division I regional in the state, at Amherst. The only other area athlete to move on from that meet was Mansfield Senior's Javario Byrd in the 100.

"It's a tribute to the hard work of the kids and a tribute to my coaching staff," Schmidt said. "The four kids have four different coaches. I don't want to put too much emphasis on that, but it is a neat aspect."

Fithian, who was fifth last year, works closely with sprint coach Dan Wittmer. Matt Gerberick keeps a close eye on Wert, Denise Schlecht trains Gross and Boyd receives guidance from Brent Rastetter.

"I'm going to fire the hurdles coach," Schmidt joked, referring to himself. "We haven't had any hurdlers get to state lately."

Fithian knows there are no guarantees, even though he already owns a state medal in the 800 and won the state

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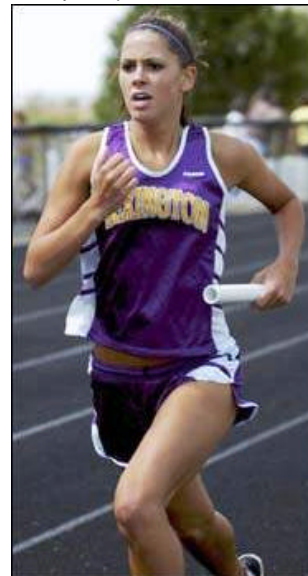


Daniel Melograna/News Journal

Lexington junior Alex Boyd (above) qualified for the state meet in the pole vault by clearing 13 feet, 6 inches.

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Lexington senior Heidi Gross (left) qualified for the state in the 3,200-meter run in her first season running track.

indoor crown in March. He broke his school record last week by .01 -- a mark originally set in last year's state meet -- but had to settle for a third-place regional finish.

His 1:54.66 makes him one of eight runners in Saturday's 16-man field that ran in the 54's.

"Can you imagine ... half the field under 1:55?" Schmidt said. "That could be one of the premier races in the meet. Ben's not 100 percent (because of knee tendinitis), but he'll never make any excuses."

An unbeaten regular season, including a title at the renowned Mehock Relays, followed his state indoor title, but Fithian discovered at the district and regional meets that no one was going to hand him another state crown -- not that he ever had a false sense of security.

"If anything, he over-trained," Schmidt said. "Ben's such a hard worker. If Dan tells him to work out at a certain speed, he'll go even faster than that. To his credit, he's trained through the pain and is determined to go for (the title)."

Wert is already a two-time state placer in the discus and her regional-title throw of 132-3 is the third-best in Saturday's field.

"All of the throwers are in the high-120's to mid-130's ... it's wide open," Schmidt said. "It's up to who steps in and takes hold of it. There's no mega-talent to beat."

Gross is a three-time state participant in cross country, but this is her state track meet debut. She owns the area's best times in the 1,600 (5:14.9) and 3,200 (11:19.0) even though she never participated in the spring until this year.

"Heidi and Val are going to Akron on track scholarships and I think Heidi realized she had to run through the spring to get ready for next fall," Schmidt said. "Heidi played basketball all winter, which speaks volumes about her work ethic and getting back to distance running this spring. It's hard not to run distances year-round and get to this level."

Boyd won the Ohio Cardinal Conference title at 13-6 and is the only area vaulter to clear 14 feet this spring. The hope is that a longer pole will help him exceed that on Saturday.

"He runs a good 100 and 200 and no question that helps him with the vault," Schmidt said. "The vault is an athletic event that combines strength, speed, agility and daring, and he has all of those qualities."

Byrd is described by Mansfield Senior coach Jason Goings as "the last man standing" for the Tygers.

He might be standing on one leg.

After placing third in the 100 dash, Byrd pulled up with a quad injury anchoring the 400 relay in the regional finals. The Tygers were winning the race, but Byrd was unable to finish and also scratched from the 200 finals. The quad is still tender, but he's hoping to be ready by Friday's prelims in the 100.

Just three weeks ago, the boys team looked like it would make it to state in as many as eight events. But then star hurdler and relay anchor Dante Davis withdrew from school to

enroll in a prep academy and things unraveled.

Even without Davis, the Tygers relay teams won district titles in the 400 and 800 and qualified for regionals in the 1,600. But injuries forced Senior High to scratch in the 800 and 1,600 regional prelims before Byrd pulled up lame in the 400 finals.

The bad luck followed their coach away from the track. A falling limb took out the side mirror on Going's car during a storm last Thursday.

"I have to laugh to keep from crying," he said.

## Oval Teens

### BOYS

- **100 dash:** 1. JAVARIO BYRD, MANSFIELD SENIOR 10.7; 2. McKnight, Ontario and Glennon, Crestline 11.0; 4. Boyd, Lexington and Sutton, Mansfield Senior and Smith, Madison 11.1.
- **200 dash:** 1. JAVARIO BYRD, MANSFIELD SENIOR and ALVIN MCKNIGHT, ONTARIO and DARVELL SMITH, MADISON 22.4; 4. Barrett, Mansfield Sr. and Harris, Highland 22.6; 6. Sutton, Mansfield Sr. 22.7.
- **400 dash:** 1. DARVELL SMITH, MAD- ISON 50.3; 2. North, Galion 50.4; 3. Harris, Highland 50.8; 4. Fithian, Lexington 51.0; 5. Lester, Mansfield Sr. and VanCura, Ont- ario 51.2.
- **800 run:** 1. BEN FITHIAN, LEXINGTON 1:55.8; 2. Orth, Ashland 1:59.6; 3. Lemke, Loudonville 2:00.6; 4. Loudermilk, Galion 2:00.1; 5. Zeuch, Galion 2:01.4; 6. Aten, Loudonville 2:02.4.
- **1,600 run:** 1. JAMES ZEUCH, GALION 4:19.9; 2. Mathias, Galion 4:24.3; 3. Johnson, Mount Gilead 4:25.8; 4. McCarron, Crestview 4:30.4; 5. Wolfe, Willard 4:31.9; 6 Schmidt, Lexington and Hershner, Lexington 4:32.1.
- **3,200 run:** 1. MATT DOTSON, WYNFORD 9:34.9; 2. Knapp, Shelby 9:48.6; 3. Johnson, Mount Gilead 9:49.6; 4. Whisler, Ashland 9:52.8; 5. Schmidt, Lexington 9:53.9; 6. Collins, Lexington 9:54.1.
- **110 hurdles:** 1. DANTE DAVIS, MANSFIELD SENIOR 14.3; 2. Boemer, Lexington 15.2; 3. Dickson, Lexington 15.3; 4. VanMeter, Lucas 15.4; 5. Long, Galion and Stephens, Willard and Stutler, Gilead Christian 15.6.
- **300 hurdles:** 1. DANTE DAVIS, MANSFIELD SENIOR and JEFF STUTLER, GILEAD CHRISTIAN 39.5; 3. VanMeter, Lucas 39.9; 4. Whitelock, Lexington 40.3; 5. Stephens, Willard 40.3; 6. Cremer, Clear Fork 40.9.
- **400 relay:** 1. MANSFIELD SENIOR 42.5; 2. Lexington 44.2; 3. Highland 44.4; 4. Northmor 44.5; 5. Crestline 44.9; 6. Shelby 45.2.
- **800 relay:** 1. MANSFIELD SENIOR 1:30.3; 2. Lexington 1:31.4; 3. Highland and Crestline 1:32.6; 5. Ashland 1:33.8; 6. Shelby 1:33.9.
- **1,600 relay:** 1. HIGHLAND 3:26.0; 2. Mansfield Senior

3:27.7; 3. Galion 3:29.3; 4. Lexington 3:31.5; 5. Ashland 3:31.7; 6. Shelby 3:33.4.

• **3,200 relay:** 1. GALION 8:02.5; 2. Lexington 8:02.7; 3. Crestview 8:15.7; 4. Mount Gilead 8:6.9; 5. Ashland 8:28.4; 6. Loudonville 8:29.6.

• **Long jump:** 1. CODY VANMETER, LUCAS 21-2; 2. Davis, Mansfield Senior 21-0; 3. Lewis, Ashland 20-11.75; 4. Kreim, Buckeye Central 20-10.75; 5. Copeland, Shelby and Bunnell, Fredericktown 20-8.75.

• **High jump:** 1. VICTOR WHITELOCK, LEXINGTON 6-4; 2. Cooper, Ashland 6-3; 3. Miller, Willard and Gruber, Mount Gilead and Owens, Madison 6-2; 6. Popa, Willard 6-1.

• **Pole vault:** 1. ALEX BOYD, LEXINGTON 14-0; 2. Dolland, Galion 13-6; 3. Damberger, Ashland 13-3; 4. Dahlby, Ontario 13-0; 5. Lowery, Shelby and McBride, Highland 12-0.

• **Shot put:** 1. TROY BRIGHT, GALION 52-7; 2. Perry, Ontario 51-10; 3. Lanum, Highland 51-3; 4. Sazdanoff, Mansfield Senior 50-11.75; 5. Howell, Crestview 48-4; 6. Miller, Northmor 45-5.5.

• **Discus:** 1. NEIL PERRY, ONTARIO 164-10; 2. Ousley, Willard 164-1; 3. Stevens, Lexington 147-4; 4. Hergatt, Crestline 145-8; 5. Bailey, Clear Fork 140-2; 6. Miller, Northmor 139-4.

## GIRLS

• **100 dash:** 1. WHITNEY LINDSAY, ST. PETER'S 12.2; 2. Beauford, Mansfield Senior 12.3; 3. Favers, Madison 12.4; 4. Gandy, Mansfield Sr. and Ridgeway, Fredericktown 12.5; 6. W. McCombs, Wynford 12.6.

• **200 dash:** 1. WHITNEY LINDSAY, ST. PETER'S 25.2; 2. Gandy, Mansfield Senior 25.7; 3. Favers, Madison and Ridgeway, Fredericktown 25.8; 5. W. McCombs, Wynford and Coombs, Mansfield Senior 26.7.

• **400 dash:** 1. WHITNEY LINDSAY, ST. PETER'S 56.4; 2. Bowman, Clear Fork 59.4; 3. Hartings, Shelby 1:01.3; 4. Foy, Bucyrus and Friebel, Shelby 1:01.9; 6. Sparks, Highland 1:02.0.

• **800 run:** 1. JENNIFER KLUGH, HIGHLAND 2:22.4; 2. McNary, Shelby 2:23.4; 3. McCarron, Crestview 2:24.9; 4. Webb, Crestview 2:25.0; 5. Roth, Clear Fork 2:25.7; 6. Geiger, Colonel Crawford 2:26.8.

• **1,600 run:** 1. HEIDI GROSS, LEXINGTON 5:14.9; 2. Thomas, Cardington 5:16.1; 3. Pifher, Colonel Crawford 5:16.3; 4. Boyce, Ontario 5:22.2; 5. McClish, Clear Fork 5:24.1; 6. Klugh, Highland 5:27.2.

• **3,200 run:** 1. HEIDI GROSS, LEXINGTON 11:19.0; 2. Thomas, Cardington 11:32.5; 3. Boyce, Ontario 11:44.3; 4. Pifher, Colonel Crawford 11:49.7; 5. Hauenstein, Ashland 11:53.3; 6. Ramey, Highland 12:06.0.




• **100 hurdles:** 1. SHARON GASE, WILLARD and KIARA WILLIAMS, MANSFIELD SENIOR 15.3; 3. Keaton, Plymouth 15.7; 4. Morgan, Gilead Christian 15.8; 5. Prosser, Madison 16.3; no others under 17 seconds.


- **300 hurdles:** 1. SHARON GASE, WILLARD 45.2; 2. Morgan, Gilead Christian 45.7; 3. Keaton, Plymouth 46.7; 4. Prosser, Madison 47.9; 5. Carper, Ashland 49.3; 6. Sharpnack, Hillsdale 49.4.
- **400 relay:** 1. MANSFIELD SENIOR 50.2; 2. Fredericktown 51.9; 3. Wynford 52.0; 4. Shelby 52.3; 5. Lexington 52.4; 6. Ontario 52.6.
- **800 relay:** 1. MANSFIELD SENIOR 1:50.4; 2. Shelby 1:50.6; 3. Colonel Crawford 1:51.4; 4. Ashland 1:52.1; 5. Lexington 1:52.4; 6. Wynford 1:53.5.
- **1,600 relay:** 1. SHELBY 4:14.2; 2. Colonel Crawford 4:14.9; 3. Mansfield Senior 4:15.0; 4. Fredericktown 4:17.5; 5. Crestview 4:19.8; 6. Ashland 4:20.8.
- **3,200 relay:** 1. CLEAR FORK 9:49.4; 2. Shelby 10:03.4; 3. Northmor 10:05.9; 4. Highland 10:07.8; 5. Lexington 10:08.3; 6. Colonel Crawford 10:17.2.
- **Long jump:** 1. KATELIN MORGAN, GILEAD CHRISTIAN 17-0.25; 2. Williams, Mansfield Senior 16-2; 3. Gearheart, Fredericktown 15-11.5; 4. Lucas, Ashland 15-9; 5. Siegfried, Highland 15-5.5; 6. T. Mack, Crestview 15-5.
- **High jump:** 1. BRITTANY RUHE, BUCYRUS 5-4; 2. Eggerton, Shelby and Gearheart, Fredericktown 5-2; 4. Lucas, Ashland 5-1; 5. Wright, Lexington 5-0; no others over 5 feet.
- **Pole vault:** 1. ANGELA FOSS, LUCAS 10-0; 2. Salva, Fredericktown 9-0; 3. Riley, Lucas and Stief, Galion 8-6; 5. T. Mack, Crestview and Frazier, Galion and Meyer, Madison and Schiefer, Bucyrus and Enrico, Ontario 8-0.
- **Shot put:** 1. KRYSTAL BARNHILL, ONTARIO 43-5; 2. Manocchio, Crestview 40-2.5; 3. Wert, Lexington 39-8.5; 4. Cheatham, Mansfield Sr. 37-9; 5. Slone, Wynford 37-4.25; 6. Fitzwater, Willard 36-3.
- **Discus:** 1. VAL WERT, LEXINGTON 135-10; 2. Barnhill, Ontario 132-5; 3. Fitzwater, Willard 120-3; 4. Roth, Shelby 119-0; 4. Britton, Ontario 118-0; 6. B. McCombs, Wynford 113-11.

-- Compiled by Jon Spencer

[jspencer@nncogannett.com](mailto:jspencer@nncogannett.com) 419-521-7239

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