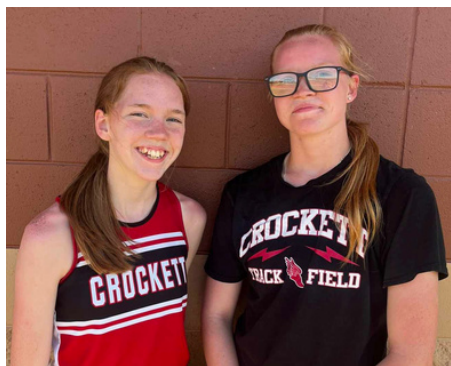


JOY EVANS CAPTURES WEST TENNESSEE SECTIONAL PENTATHLON CHAMPIONSHIP



Above: Sophomore Claire Evans (left) and senior Joy Evans -- sisters representing Crockett County at the West Sectional Women's Outdoor Pentathlon competition Monday at Lakeland Preparatory School -- were all smiles after Claire finished sixth and Joy claimed the championship title and a berth in the upcoming TSSAA State Pentathlon. (Photo by Julie Nass)

By Ron Barry

Around Crockett County High School, senior Joy Evans has been known to spike volleyballs very hard; play the trombone (and a couple of other instruments) in the marching band; excel in the classroom; and succeed in the sport of track and field, not letting the fact that the campus has neither a track nor a field bother her.

Oh, and if you need a repair done on your automobile or truck – she can handle that too.

So it's no surprise that her "jack-of-all-trades" approach to life would draw her to competing in the pentathlon, a grueling one-day ordeal in which athletes battle in five different events: the 100-meter hurdles, high jump, shot put, long jump, and 800-meter run.

Evans did that Monday at Lakeland Prep near Memphis on an 85-degree day that would tax the hardest of souls. And – unsurprisingly to anyone who's watched her compete at anything – she took home the championship and earned her second straight trip to Murfreesboro's TSSAA State Pentathlon Championships May 15.

"The heat definitely had an impact on everyone there," Evans said after the day-long grind. "All day people were doing anything to stay in the shade. In between events we went straight back to the tent to cool off and get something cold to drink."

Evans finished second in the West Sectional last year and wound up 12th in the State Championships. But with improvement in each event this spring, she boosted her overall point total by close to 200 and won three of the five individual contests, setting a new personal record in the 800-meter run by three seconds.

Crockett track and field coach Julie Nass – immensely impressed by Joy and her younger sister Claire, who finished sixth in her first pentathlon competition – was succinct in her assessment.

"Joy was dominant all day," Nass said. "I'm very proud of both of these girls. It was a hot, grueling day to compete in five events. But these girls are tough!"

Joy accumulated 2,237 total points, 351 better than second-place finisher Akeelah Young of Covington. The two tied in the high jump, but Evans defeated Young in the other four events to establish her healthy victory margin.

There were 16 total entries in the pentathlon. Joy was fifth in the 100-meter hurdles, running a time of 19.95 to earn 307 points. Young was sixth in 20.12 for 292 points. Both athletes cleared 4'-6" in the high jump for a third-place tie worth 481 points.

But then, Evans stepped it up a notch. In the shot put – her best event – Joy posted a throw of 9.28 meters for a first-place finish that brought 482 points. Young was fourth, but her best throw of 7.06 meters only claimed 339 points, falling 143 behind Joy in that event alone. "My best pentathlon event by far is the shot put," Evans said. "I gained a big advantage because most of the other girls specialize in sprints and jumps. I didn't get a PR this time, but I ended up about five feet farther than second place, which is about 100 points' difference."

With the cushion established, Joy solidified the final standings by also winning the long jump with a leap of 4.55 meters, adding another 79-point edge over Young, who was third at 4.23 meters. Evans' jump was worth 441 points.

Then, dominating the torturous 800-meter run – winning by almost five seconds over second-place finisher Claire – Evans recorded a 2:44.20 worth 526 points, 114 more than Young earned for her fourth-place mark of 2:55.09.

"I'm really proud I was able to score higher this year with improvement all around, but especially in the 800 meters," Joy said. "I dropped almost 10 seconds from what I ran last year."

Claire, only a sophomore, was tenth in the 100-meter hurdles (22.37 for 135 points); ninth in the high jump (4'0" for 331 points); tenth in the shot put (5.35 meters for 230 points); fifth in the long jump (4.10 meters for 331 points); and second in the 800-meter run (2:49.90 for 465 points), for an overall total of 1,492.

Having Claire compete as well was a boost for Joy as well, and she related a story from the competition that highlighted how unusual it was for both siblings to be entered.

"When we were throwing shot put, the coach running the event called out 'Evans on deck', and Claire and I looked at each other and asked him, 'Which one?,' she said. "He replied, 'Crockett County.' We looked at each other again and asked, 'Uh, which one?' Another coach working the event laughed and told him we were sisters!"

After Joy competes in the State pentathlon, she'll join Claire and several other Cavalier athletes a week later in Murfreesboro for the TSSAA State Meet. Both sisters run relay events as well as competing individually.

Final results of the West Sectional Women's Outdoor Pentathlon:

1. Joy Evans, Crockett County – 2,237 points; 2. Akeelah Young, Covington – 1,886; 3. Camarya Woodland, Haywood – 1,724; 4. Elizabeth Foster, Lakeland Prep – 1,617; 5. Eliana Kennedy, Lakeland Prep – 1,594; **6. Claire Evans, Crockett County – 1,492;** 7. Jasmine Kilpatrick, Raleigh Egypt – 1,463; 8. Zamaria Murphy, Haywood – 1,437; 9. Abby Stephens, Lakeland Prep – 1,397; 10. Demya Taylor, Raleigh Egypt – 1,386.