



Photo provided by Tom Beckwith/ Daily News Journal

Christian Locke, second from left, qualified for the state tournament next week. Locke finished second in both the 800 and 1,600 meters at Saturday's sectional event at Blackman High School.

Locke, Perkins qualify for state

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

Christian Locke is no stranger to the state stage, but this year he'll be bringing a teammate.

Locke and Jayren Perkins each qualified for the state track meet after finishing in the top three of their respective events in the sectionals at Blackman High School.

Locke secured a spot in both the 800- and 1,600-meter races, finishing second in both events Saturday. Perkins clinched a spot with a third-place finish in the high jump.

Senior Bethany Fye just missed the cut for state, failing to finish in the top three in the triple jump — an event in which she set a school record during sectional qualifying in Rhea

County on May 3. "They all performed well while under an immense amount of pressure," said WCHS track coach Tom Moore. "Jayren jumped well and tied for third against a phenomenal field, while Bethany came up just a little short after having a great year for us."

"Christian was able to move on in two events while running a personal-best in the 1,600."

Locke turned in a blistering time of 4 minutes, 29.73 seconds competing in the 1,600, a mark only bested by Red Bank's Cole Bullock (4:14.42). The speedy senior, who is bound for Berea College this fall for cross country and track, nearly missed taking top honors in the 800, an event he was 13th in at last year's state tournament.

Martin is the reigning state champion in the high jump, leaping 6'5" last year. Perkins' school

Locke flew around the track in 2:00.24 in the 800, just a step behind Blackman standout Charles Bennett's winning 1:58.96 time.

Because the May 24 spring fling state event places the 800 and 1,600 events so close together, Locke may only be able to put his best foot forward in one event at MTSU. The senior said he's leaning toward the 800.

After setting a school record to qualify for the sectionals, Perkins was once again at his best at Blackman. The senior cleared 6 feet in the high jump, tying him with Emilio Martin for third. Bradley Central's Gunnar Olson won the event with a jump of 6'2".

Martin is the reigning state champion in the high jump, leaping 6'5" last year. Perkins' school

record stands at 6'4", which would have tied him for second at last year's state championships.

Moore believes both Perkins and Locke will be in contention next week. At the very least, he believes they'll put on a show that Pioneer fans will want to see.

"I'm excited to watch Jayren and Christian at this event. I'm confident they will both give their best effort," said Moore. "The state track meet at the AAA level is incredible. Most teams can only qualify a couple of athletes and nearly all of the athletes who place are college-level athletes."

The high jump is currently set for 11 a.m. next Thursday at Dean A. Hayes Stadium. The 1,600 is the fifth event on the track schedule, which is set to begin at 3 p.m. The 800 is the ninth event.



Jeffery Simmons photo

Hailey Wood races around the bags during her first-inning triple. Wood went 3-for-4 Monday.

WCHS softball

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Many of those runs were saved by Lady Mustang left-fielder Carissa Frost.

Frost made a leaping grab on a line drive by Elia Atterson in the second, stealing a potential two-run, extra-base hit from the Lady Pioneer freshman. She followed by gunning Savannah Cox at home to end the fourth, when coach Martin rolled the dice on a two-out single by Mikkola in hopes of tying the game at 2-2.

Instead, Frost made a perfect throw to preserve her team's one-run lead.

Frost saved her best play for last, running down a Mikkola liner in the gap to end the sixth when Warren County had the bases loaded.

"Carissa steps up. We joke at practice that we can't get it down in the outfield. She catches everything," said Walker Valley coach Lauren Limburg. "I can't say enough about her defense, and our team's as a whole."

Warren County wouldn't go down without making it interesting though.

The Lady Pioneers got down to their last out quickly in the seventh, but got a break when Walker Valley dropped the potential final out at first. With two runners on, senior Lexie Chadwell entered and roped a single into right field to load the bases.

MaKenna Mason followed with a RBI single through the middle, giving

hope to a packed Lady Pioneer crowd of a comeback. Atterson followed suit, drilling another RBI single into center.

Wood came up with the bases loaded with a chance to dig into the deficit, but her hot shot to third was scooped on one hop. The Lady Pioneer speedster was thrown out by a step, ending a season where Warren County made waves as a top contender in the Midstate.

"Warren County is a great team. They had a great season and played a heck of a game," said Limburg. "We couldn't let up. We had to keep fighting."

Wood finished with a team-high three hits in the loss, followed by Atterson and Mason with two hits each. Chadwell and Kyra Hillis had one hit each in their final games, joining Hope Mullican as one of the most successful senior classes in school history. Mikkola and Bri Young also had one hit apiece.

Johnson took the loss, throwing into the fourth inning before giving way to Whiles. Cantrell took over in the sixth and closed out the seventh.

Pruitt went the distance to earn the victory. Kaylee Hughes paced the Lady Mustang offense, finishing with two hits and two RBIs. Walker Valley advanced to the region final, where it will face Ooltewah Wednesday after the Lady Owls downed Cookeville 12-0.

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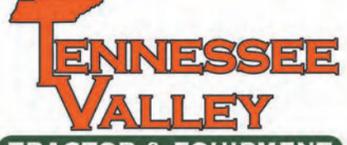
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