

Carlinville Won State Track Title 30 Years ago this Season

By **TOM EMERY**
Enquirer~Democrat Contributor

The best coaches and athletes always want to go out on top. Some do it better than others.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Carlinville High School’s boys track state title, as the Cavaliers rolled to the championship in 1996 with some of the elite names in Carlinville sports, many of whom closed their careers at the pinnacle.

Tunde Ridley, a generational athlete not only in track but in football, captured four individual state titles, tying an Illinois record in his final appearance in a Carlinville uniform.

Meanwhile, the head coach, Dave Jokisch, chose to step down, concluding a career that saw him earn a spot in the Illinois Track and Cross Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

Carlinville’s state title of 1996 was no surprise. The Cavaliers had finished as state runners-up the previous year, missing the title by only six points.

Ridley led a 1-2 finish with Steve Car in the triple jump in 1995, and was so far ahead in the long jump after Friday’s preliminaries that his mark stood up as the eventual winner.

The next spring, Carlinville was loaded, and were considered a state title favorite from the outset with a deep, talented roster including John Genta, Dan Wills, Matt Link, Shane Boland, Bryan Lusk, Amit Chopra, Mitch Wagner, Kevin San-son, Dee Roller, Luke Smith, and Robert Pollard.

The Cavaliers contended in every big meet in 1996, especially at the Rochester Invitational, where Car-

linville edged three-time defending champion Rushville.

Carlinville scored an impressive 109 points at Rochester, including 58 in field events. The Cavaliers then rolled to a 109-48 win over Virden at the Macoupin County meet, where Ridley snapped meet records in the 100, 200, and triple jump, leading 1-2 Carlinville finishes in two of those events. Carlinville also won its third consecutive sectional title.

All of those are overshadowed by the IHSA state meet in Charleston, where Ridley’s performance remains one of the greatest in the history of Illinois high school track.

With hundreds of Carlinville fans in attendance, Ridley captured the 100, 200, triple jump, and long jump, becoming only the second athlete in the 107-year history of the meet to win four titles.

The first time was in 1981 by Mike Conley of Luther South, who captured the gold medal in the triple jump at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. Ridley smashed the Class 1A state record in the long jump in 1996 at 24’1.5”, which still stands.

Coupled with his success at Charleston as an underclassman, Ridley became the all-time leader in state meet medals with ten, including his six state titles. He holds the career record for points at the state meet, with 82.

Incredibly, Ridley accounted for 40 of Carlinville’s 46 team points in 1996, which was enough for a decisive margin over second-place Rushville, with 31. It was the first state team title for Carlinville in

any sport. Also scoring for Carlinville at the state meet were Lusk, who finished fifth in the shot put, and Chopra, the seventh-place finisher in the long jump. “We knew with five events remaining that we were going to win,” recalled Jokisch. “My oldest son and I were keeping the scores, and I had predicted that we’d finish with 47 points. As it was, we had 46.” Ridley later received a full athletic scholarship to the University of Illinois, and won four letters in track.



Tunde Ridley, the superstar of the 1996 IHSA boys track championship won by Carlinville High School, is shown in his later athletic career. Ridley captured four individual state titles in 1996, accounting for 40 of Carlinville's 46 team points.

The state championship was also the final career highlight for Jokisch, who chose to retire with his program on top. “I knew that a state title would ever be hard to match,” said Jokisch in 2019. “I also thought it was time to give my assistant, Ken Garrison, a chance to be a head coach.” In his twenty-six years at the helm, Carlinville won twenty-one county team titles – six more than the next-highest person – as well as ten district and sectional titles. Jokisch’s teams also captured eighteen

South Central Conference crowns, more than any other boys’ track coach in the 100-year history of the conference. Jokisch remained as a math teacher at Carlinville for the next four years, and continued to coach cross country. In the fall of 1996, he directed the Carlinville girls to a second-place state finish. Three decades later, the 1996 IHSA boys track title remains one of the foremost athletic achievements in the history of Carlinville High School.



Dave Jokisch, right, was the head coach of the Carlinville boys track team that captured the 1996 IHSA state title. He elected to retire from his head coaching position after the title, concluding a sterling career that included 21 Macoupin County team titles, 18 South Central Conference championships, and ten district and sectional titles.

Scaling a proven tool for Illinois’ housing crisis

By **ALLISON CLEMENTS**
Executive Director, Illinois Housing Council

Illinois faces a severe affordable housing shortage that affects communities statewide. Nearly 300,000 affordable rental homes are missing for the state’s lowest-income residents, while rising rents and home prices continue to strain working families, employers, and local economies.

As Governor JB Pritzker and the General Assembly debate major housing proposals, lawmakers should strengthen a proven tool that has quietly delivered results for more than two decades: the Illinois Affordable Housing Tax Credit.

But the program is set to expire later this year. Without legislative action, Illinois risks losing a critical financing tool at the very moment affordable housing development faces unprecedented challenges.

Construction costs have surged dramatically since 2019 — up 44 percent in Chicago and 48 percent nationally — while financing has become more difficult and unpredictable. At the same time, the program’s current 5 percent annual growth rate is no longer enough to keep pace with rising costs and growing demand.

The Illinois Affordable Housing Tax Credit provides a 50 percent tax credit on donations of cash, land, or buildings made to nonprofit housing developers. These contributions help close financing gaps that often determine whether projects move forward or stall.

The program’s impact can be seen across Illinois. In Chicago, Reclaiming Chicago has transformed vacant lots into homes for working families. In Rock Island, the program has helped nearly 500 workers become homeowners. In Deerfield, land donations supported housing for workers who serve the community but otherwise could not afford to live there.

Overall, the program has leveraged more than \$510 million in private donations and supported tens of thousands of affordable homes statewide.

Illinois cannot afford to lose tools that work. Extending the Illinois Affordable Housing Tax Credit is essential, but lawmakers should also expand the program’s capacity so it can support more developments in more communities.

By renewing and strengthening this bipartisan program before it expires, Illinois can scale a proven solution to meet the housing challenges facing the state today.

LLCC Community Education presents “History Cooks” at Lincoln Home

Weekly culinary demonstrations

Lincoln Land Community College Community Education is again partnering with the Lincoln Home National Historic Site and Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau this summer to present “History Cooks,” a series of free cooking and baking demonstrations of dishes found along Route 66. All programs will be on Fridays at noon at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. Attendees will receive a small sample of the item prepared and a souvenir recipe card so they can re-create the dishes at home.

The lineup includes:
June 5: “Chicago Italian Beef” – Chef Kim Carter, LLCC adjunct culinary instructor.

June 12: “Springfield Horse-shoe” – Chef Ty Bergman, LLCC adjunct culinary instructor.

June 19: “Springfield Chili” – Chef David Radwine, LLCC

adjunct culinary instructor.
June 26: “St. Louis Spumoni Shake and Toasted Ravioli” – Sheridan Lane, director LLCC culinary program and operations.
July 3: “St. Louis Goopy Butter Cake” – Chef Stephanie Warren, LLCC adjunct culinary instructor.
July 10: “Southern Fried Catfish” from Lebanon, Mo. – Chef Lakesha Jackson, LLCC Community Education culinary instructor.
July 17: “Brisket” from Shamrock, Tex. – Chef Howard Seidel, LLCC adjunct culinary instructor.
July 24: “Chicken Fried Steak” from Tulsa, Okla. – Chef Channing Fullaway, culinary coordinator, LLCC Community Education.
July 31: “Blue Corn Enchilada” from Santa Fe, N.M. – Chef Kevin Sullivan, culinary instructor, LLCC Community Education.

Aug. 7: “Pot Roast Skillet” from Needles, Calif. – Chef Jamie Williams, LLCC adjunct culinary instructor.

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Pere Marquette to host Two Rivers Family Fishing Fair

Edited By **MELISSA LYNN**
Enquirer~Democrat Reporter

Pere Marquette State Park in Grafton will be hosting the Two Rivers Family Fishing Fair on Saturday, June 6, featuring a day full of fun and educational activities for families.

Event hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the park, which is near Grafton on Illinois 100. There is no admission or parking fees, and no fishing license or gear is required.

The fishing fair will feature several activities including a catch-and-release bluegill pond where kids can have their photo taken with their catch, the One-Cast station where everyone wins a prize, and bow-fishing stations where kids can shoot at moving targets in a pool or at a three-dimensional target. Those who complete seven stations will receive a prize and have a chance to catch trout from the pond.

This year’s event will include appearances by Hall of Fame fisherman Jimmy Houston and Tim Guraedy, known as “Mountain Man” from the television show

“Duck Dynasty.” There will also be performances by Camo the Clown and music by Steve and Jackie of Outlaw Opry. Returning this year is a 4,000-gallon mobile aquarium stocked with fish species found throughout the Illinois River. Food and beverages will be available. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources urban fishing coordinator, Scott Isringhausen, says, “We want to get kids hooked on fishing, and the Family Fishing Fair helps connect kids and families to fun outdoor activities. Thanks to our generous sponsors, we are able to continue offering this free event.”

The Two Rivers Family Fishing Fair is hosted by The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge, which is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For more information, contact Pere Marquette State Park at 618-786-3323, ext. 1, or Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge at 618-883-2524.

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