

Top of the heap

State's best out to prove selves at Top Times meet

BY JEFF NEWTON
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Indoor track

Trying to become the best shot put thrower in the state is the big accomplishment Jacobs senior Pat Whalen is aiming for this season.

To be the best thrower in his family — now *that* would be a real accomplishment.

Whalen, who is still trying to catch his brother Matt's state title (Matt won the 2002 outdoor crown), is the top seed and defending champion at the Illinois Prep Top Times Invitational, and today at the Armory at the University of Illinois in Champaign he looks to emerge from 12 of the best throwers in the state to repeat his title.

"My brother really has pushed me," Whalen said of Matt, who captured the 2002 indoor title to go with his outdoor crown. "I want to be the best, and that means beating the best at this meet."

The field events start at 11 a.m., with the competition on the track starting 30 minutes later.

Whalen is the defending meet champion and figures to get his best competition from Jovan Jovanovic of Maine East and Roy Magana of West Aurora.

Benet senior Mike Schubert, Carmel senior James Larson and Lake Zurich's Derek Blanchard also will compete.

Glenbard East senior Dechet Miller will lead a group of 12 throwers into competition. Her teammate Natasha Thigpen, along with Palatine senior Keri Gavin, Fremd sophomore Carmen Faust, and Barrington junior Erin Vukovich will all compete.

On the track the distance events feature a deep group of the state's best runners.

Palatine sophomore Glenn Morris will get to show his wares against the likes of Mike Popejoy of Wheaton Warrenville South and Matt McCabe of Benet in the 1,600-meter run and Dan and Joe Curran of Naperville North and Brian Lesiewicz of Schaumburg in the 3,200.

"I will just try and stick with my race plan," Morris said after winning the 1,600 at the MSL indoor last week. "I know a lot of those guys from cross-country so this should be a lot of fun."

Sophomore Ryan Craven of Prospect and senior Tim Larson round out a deep field in the 3,200-meter run in which no runner has a seed time over 9:50.

Springfield sophomore star Hailee Elmore will be the one to catch in the 1,600- and 3,200-meter runs. Carbondale's Caitlin Chrisman will keep chase along with Amy

Laskowske of Palatine, Kelly Vrshek of Rolling Meadows and Laura Pearson of Schaumburg.

Streamwood's Nance Nieto and Paulina Garcia are just behind Chrisman in the 3,200.

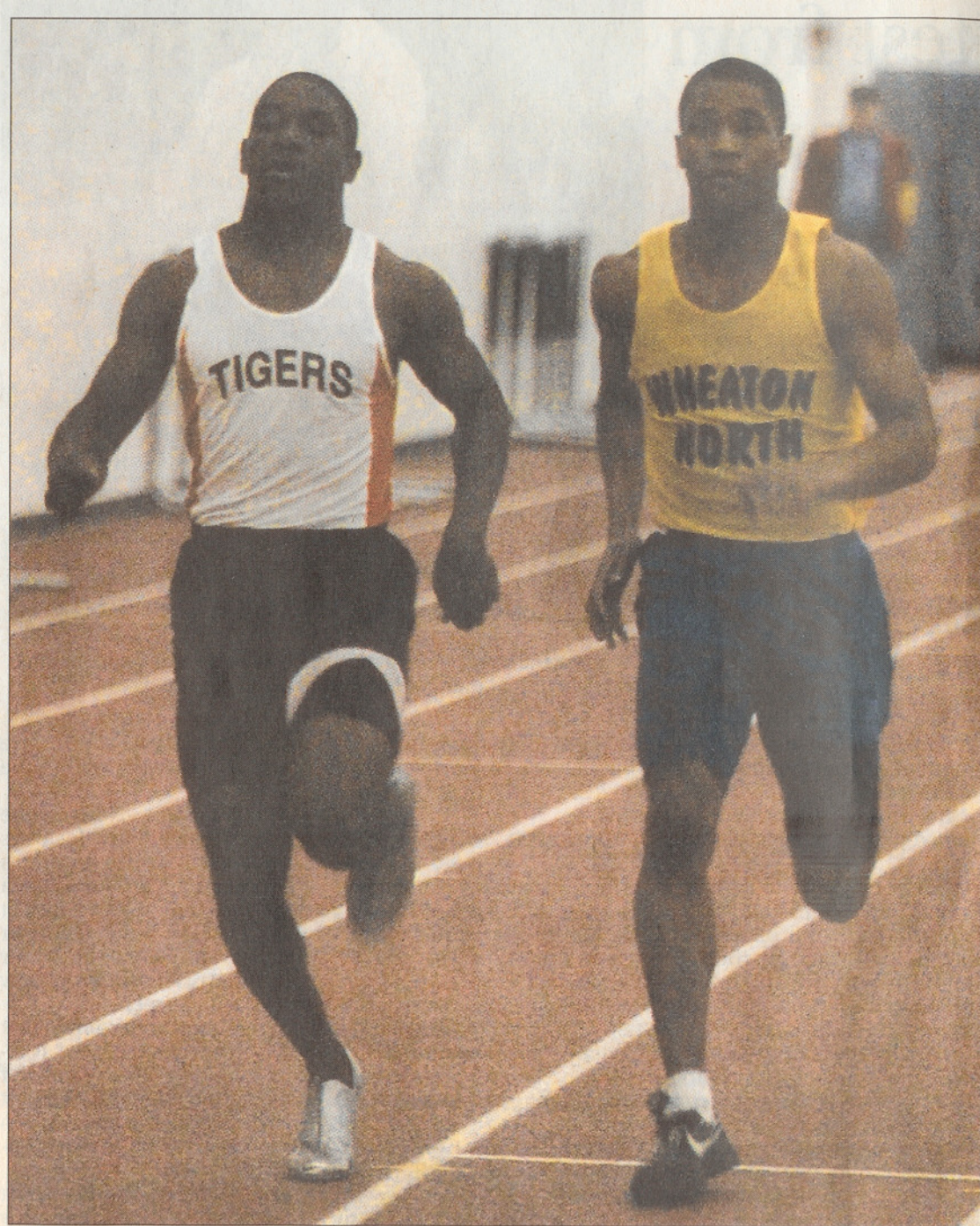
When it comes to the distance relays, the 3,200 relay should be the best of the bunch. In the Class AA boys field, the race features three teams that raced in the top six outdoors last year in Nequa Valley, Prospect and top-seeded Lyons Township.

Nequa Valley also will feature strong groups in the 800 and 1,600 relays as the Wildcats hold the top seed in both events. Carmel, Wheaton Warrenville South and Palatine will give the Wildcats plenty to think about in the 1,600-meter relay to wrap up the meet.

In the 800-meter run, Prospect senior Peter Garde popped one of the state's best times indoors last week at 1:57.38 and is just behind top-seed Tim Pierie of Lincoln-Way East. Seniors Joe Gajewski of Glenbard East and Geoffrey Houtman of Nequa Valley are just behind in the tight field.

The 400 will be another race to watch as the top-nine seed times are separated by a second. Carmel senior Rich Fugiel is among a pack chasing Chicago Hubbard senior Dominique Bryson.

Wheaton Warrenville South's Tywon Green will compete in the 200



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Wheaton Warrenville South's Tywon Green, left against Wheaton North's Malcolm McCreary, will compete in the 200-meter dash today at the Illinois Prep Top Times Invitational in Champaign.