

TRACK AND FIELD: Athletes compete at Day 1 of West Texas Junior Olympics



Peter Dindinger|Odessa American

Athletes competed in Day 1 of the USATF West Texas Junior Olympic Track and Field Championships on Friday afternoon at Ratliff Stadium.

Posted: Friday, June 8, 2018 9:39 pm

by [Peter Dindinger](#)

Track athletes — young and old — endured the hot temperatures during Day 1 of the U.S. Track and Field West Texas Junior Olympic Championships on Friday afternoon at Ratliff Stadium.

Athletes that place in the top six will get a chance to advance to the Region XII meet in San Antonio July 10-14.

The top four from the Region XII meet will then advance to the Junior Olympics July 23-29 in Greensboro, N.C.

The West Texas Junior Olympics has been a marquee event in Odessa. The meet gives athletes from the area a chance to compete on the big stage.

Stella Neboh, the meet coordinator, hopes to see the event remain in Odessa.

“Odessa has been hosting this meet for several years now,” Neboh said. “It is a USATF sanctioned meet, and our association includes Odessa, Midland, Lubbock, Amarillo — it extends out.

“It gives our kids the opportunity and saves us from going to other cities. We are pulling people from all over the state to come here and patronize our city. So, they are filling up our hotels, they are eating in our restaurants, and so we benefit from hosting this meet.”

Athletes ranging from 8 and under to 18 competed in various events. Teams that competed included the Odessa Flying Lyons, Tall City Christian TC, West Texas Track, Midland Crusader Track, USATF West Texas, and the Lubbock Olympians.

Every year, the event gets better and better. The overall goal is keep attracting more kids to the world of track and field.

“The turnout is good. We keep improving every year since it’s a qualifying meet,” Neboh said. “If you don’t run this meet you cannot move up to the next level.

“Every year we just keep encouraging kids to come out.”

Neboh also serves as a coach of the West Texas Track club. The club starts coaching kids as young as 2 years old.

The event serves as a good building block for the youngsters. They will contribute to the already rich track history in Odessa.

“This is great for our team. Our West Texas Track club — we work hard to host this meet along with USATF,” Neboh said. “We have two other track meets that we’ll be hosting this month in the next week or two. We need to keep it going. We love it.

“I enjoy seeing all these kids coming out and competing every summer. You can see the smiles, the happiness. This is a good building (block) for them to continue running track.”

FAMILY COMPETITION >> To the Hayes family, pole vaulting means everything.

During the event, Dawson Hayes, a senior at Odessa High, got a rare opportunity to compete against his father, Curtis.

Dawson tallied a mark of 13 feet, 5 inches to take first place in his division. Curtis, at the age of 42, had a mark of 12 feet.

“It’s fun being able to do it against him because for the longest time he’s always jumped higher than me,” Dawson Hayes said with a bright smile. “I finally got him today. We’ve been talking crap all up to this meet to see who’s gonna jump higher.”

“It’s always good to jump your best, especially in this heat. It took a lot out of me at 14. It was probably my favorite meet so far.”

The Hayes family has been trying to keep the sport of pole vaulting alive. The family has a pit in their backyard which they’ve used for practice.

“It’s kind of fun. Both of my sons are out here, most of these kids jump at the house or we’re at meets all together,” Curtis Hayes said. “I’m 42. To come out here and jump in 95 degree weather takes a little bit of a toll on me, but it’s fun.

“I wouldn’t miss it. I’m gonna have many opportunities to jump with my kids before they’re long gone. There are not a lot of people that do this sport. I try to keep it alive.”

GOOD DAY >> It was a good day for West Texas Track and the Odessa Flying Lyons.

In the girls 100-meter dash for 13- and 14-year-olds, Shaniah Tealer of the Flying Lyons took first with a time 14.68.

Flying Lyons' Tyra Harris and Amyra Allen finished first and second in the girls 100-meter dash in the 15-16 age division with the times of 12.64 and 13.14, respectively.

West Texas Track's Max Chavez posted a time of 16.46 to take first in the 8-and-under 100-meter dash.

The top four finishers in the 3,000-meter run in the 15-16 age division were all a part of the Flying Lyons. Bryceson Boss led the pack with a time of 11:10.69.

Jahsiah Sio of the Flying Lyons had a mark of 9-11 to win the 8-and-under long jump. West Texas Track's Garrin Coy won the 8-and-under long jump with a mark of 7-11.75.

Lastly, in the 3,000-meter run in the 15-16 age division, West Texas Track's Raily Rodriguez finished first with a time of 13:19.80