

Byron freshman Paige Knodle survives busy day

By Reed Schreck

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CHARLESTON —

Byron freshman Paige Knodle came into her first IHSA Class A girls state track meet seeded second in the 300-meter low hurdles.

"That made me more comfortable," she said, "but at the same time, I have to live up to it."

She did in Friday's prelims by capturing her heat in 47.24 seconds. She hopes to again in today's finals at Eastern Illinois University's O'Brien Stadium.

Knodle clocked the seventh fastest time Friday, with Benton senior Leah Orley easily first at 44.47 but everyone else ahead of her within reach.

Knodle also will be in the pole vault (9 feet) and 400 relay finals (51.35). She and senior sister Brittany both missed out in the 100 hurdles.

"I just want to do my best," Paige said about today. "There are so many talented girls it's hard to expect first for everything."

"I just wanted to come here and get good experience for the next three years."

Rock River Valley veteran performers held their own as well. Rockford Christian Life senior Jenner Sio already produced her best ever on her final triple jump (37 feet, 3 inches), but will need to surpass that to match her second-place showing of last year.

Sio smiled after her jump while awaiting the measurement. She screamed and threw both hands in the air toward the stands after the distance was announced.

"That's all I was asking for," she said of getting a P.R. (personal record). "It's a great feeling."

She went 36-9 last year to take second. Now she stands third, with the leader at 39-1 1/4 and second place at 38-2 1/2.

"There are a lot of great jumpers this year," she said.

Sio went 16-9 1/2 in the long jump to qualify ninth best.

Oregon senior Allison Kereven held her second seed in the shot put, but fell shy of her personal best of 41-2 1/2 at last week's sectional. Her best in prelims was 39-4 1/2, with Lena-Winslow junior Chelsea Rimington qualifying seventh (36-9 1/2).

As for today's finals, Kereven said, "I'm hoping for first."

It will require another P.R., as freshman Kelsey Card of Carlinville cranked 43-5 1/4.

"I believe I do," Kereven said when asked if she has three better throws in her for today. "I'm hoping for maybe a couple more feet. I've got to get pumped up and throw as far as I can.

"I did what I could for the (cool but sunny) conditions. We got in the finals, and that was the goal for today."

Kereven, who will throw for Western Illinois University, scratched on her third and final discus toss. That left her with a best of 105-9 and out of the finals and well short of her best of 125-11 last year.

"I don't know, really," she said as an explanation.

Winnebago junior Hayley Thomas, fifth in each of the past two state meets in the 1,600, grabbed the 12th and final berth for today's finals with a time of 5:28.40. Her mind was elsewhere.

"We're concentrating more on the 4 x 8 (3,200 relay)," she said, as the Indians entered the weekend seeded second. "The mile for me is just an extra bonus. It's still fun to do. I'll do what I can."

Winnebago had the third-best qualifying time (10:02.19), or more than three seconds off its sectional showing.

That means they ran as planned.

"We just focused on qualifying," Thomas said. "We qualified, and all had something left. We didn't want to go all out. That's good, because we saved up for tomorrow."

The objective today is to duplicate what the Indians did in placing second last year.

"Everybody will have to step up," Thomas said. "We all stepped up last year and PR'd by 20 seconds. We'll try to do the same. We'll give it our all."

Also advancing to today's finals individually were Pec co-op's Danielle Buttel in the long jump (sixth at 17-8); Galena's Ashley Rojemann ((fourth, 121-10) and Rimington (10th,

116-9) in the discus; **Rockford Christian's Molly Ellis in the 400 (third, 57.67) and 100 (sixth, 12.63); Rockford Christian's Courtney McKibben in the 100 hurdles (tied for seventh, 15.50);** Lena-Winslow's Katie Jensen in the 1,600 (eighth, 5:24.74), and Sterling Newman's Amanda Trancoso in the 800 (ninth, 2:20.93).

Christian Life's Holly Wiersema (9-3) and Genoa-Kingston's Sam McClay (9-3) made the pole vault finals. Wiersema also made the high jump finals (5-2).

Relays running today also include Byron in the 3,200 (10:13.80); Lena-Winslow (51.16) and Pec co-op (51.42) in the 400, and **Rockford Christian in the 1,600 (4:07.08).**

Benton and Bloomington Central Catholic each advanced nine qualifiers to finals.

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