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McKinleyville sprinter Joe Beeman, left, advanced to next week's Meet of Champions in the 200m on Saturday at Crescent City. Jackie Christensen/The Eureka Reporter

Next stop, MOC

by Jackie Christensen, 5/20/2007

A total of five Humboldt-Del Norte Conference athletes won a North Coast Section title Saturday afternoon at the Class 2A NCS championships at Del Norte and Diablo Valley, and 36 more advanced to next week's Meet of Champions at Berkeley.

Highlighting the afternoon — as expected — was Del Norte's defending NCS champion pole-vaulter Kelsy Hintz, who once again dominated the field, clearing 12 feet, 0 inches, for her second consecutive NCS title (and an NCS record, 10 inches above the old record of 11-2).

Hintz also qualified for the MOC in the 4x100 meters relay and the 200m.

Unexpectedly, Fortuna's Mallorie Franco didn't qualify for the MOC in the high jump (she tied the school record this year by clearing 5-3 and was the only girl coming into Saturday's meet that had cleared 5-1), but she made up for it by breaking her own school record in the long jump with a leap of 17-4 for a section championship.

"I practiced hard all week for the long jump, changed some things and was feeling comfortable," Franco said.

Del Norte's Bailee McCulloch was also an NCS champion in the 200 meters (25.91 seconds), while qualifying for the MOC in the 100m.

Although Eureka didn't have a section champion, a total of 12 Loggers advanced to the MOC, which was the most for the Big Five.

Eureka's 4x100m relay team of Jerome Burks, Corey Doyle, Jack Lamb and Aric Nelson qualified, while distance runners Dillon Ayers, Kyle Louv and Jonathan O'Connell advanced in the 3,200m. Eureka's Nina Carson qualified in the 1,600m and the 3,200m, while Kesslyn Martin advanced in the 100m hurdles, Krysteana Pearl and Eric Wright qualified in the shot put and Jason Tinsley will advance in the triple jump.

"We had a great day," said Eureka head coach Joel Thornburgh. "We had a number of people set personal records and we were just real happy with our performance overall."

Of all the Big Five athletes who qualified for the MOC, only four qualified in three separate events — McCulloch, Hintz, Del Norte's Rachel Cink (4x100m relay, 300m hurdles and the shot put) and Fortuna's Heather Morris, who advanced in the 4x100m relay, the 100m hurdles and the 300m hurdles.

Fortuna had a total of six of its athletes qualify for the MOC, including the 4x100m relay team of Morris, Amanda Church, Franco and Lorien Patmore, hurdler Skylar Rice and shot putter Rhiannon Roper.

Patmore also advanced in the high jump, finishing third overall.

"It was kind of bittersweet today," said Fortuna head coach Rod Kausen. "A couple of things didn't go perfect but the kids were sharp and performed well. I was very satisfied with how it ended up."

Arcata qualified five girls to the MOC, including their 4x400m relay team of Karen Pontoni, Tichelle Daggs, Renta Westmoreland and Anya Ritter (Ritter also qualified in the 800m), while pole-vaulter Celeste Manka also advanced.

The Arcata boys 4x400m relay team was in good shape to earn a qualifying spot early in the race when disaster struck and runners collided, falling to the track.

"We had some misfortune today, but I thought we performed great," said Arcata head coach James Washington. "But at least everyone got the chance to compete and experience the competition at this level."

The McKinleyville Panthers had three of their athletes qualify for the MOC, including Brittainy Chown in the long jump, Joe Beeman in the 200m and Zach Caldwell in the pole vault.

"Only Brittainy made it this far for us last year so it's quite an improvement," said McKinleyville head coach Mark Sahlberg. "I was proud of all the kids that made it here and even the ones that didn't qualify."

In the Class A championships at Diablo Valley, it was Hoopa's Alanna Nulph who stole the show, winning section titles in the shot put and the discus.

Hoopa's Teresina Obie also qualified for the MOC in both throwing events, while for South Fork, Casey Murphy (100m), Brittany Neill (high jump), Taylor Neill (pole vault), Michael Radenbaugh (800m), Hank Carl (3,200m), Josh McDonald (discus) and the 4x100 relay team also advanced.

The Meet of Champions is scheduled for next Friday and Saturday at Edwards Stadium (University of California, Berkeley), which will be followed by the CIF state championships June 1-2 at Sacramento.



Eureka shot putter Eric Wright competes during the NCS Class 2A championships at Del Norte High on Saturday. Jackie Christensen/The Eureka Reporter