

Sam Elliott-Barnes Wins 200 Meters In Norm Armstrong Invitational, Alton Shows Promise For New Season Ahead

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BELLEVILLE - Sam Elliott-Barnes won the 200 meters, while other Alton track athletes performed well as the Redbirds finished in 18th place in the Norm Armstrong Invitational track meet, the first big event of the new season, Saturday at Bob Goalby Field at Belleville West High School.

Edwardsville won the meet with 75 points, with Naperville Central coming in second at 67 points, O'Fallon was third with 49 points, Chicago Kenwood placed fourth with 45 points, and the Maroons rounded out the top five with 43 points. East St. Louis also finished in the top ten, coming in seventh with 40 points, and Triad was 10th with 29 points.

The Redbirds are off to a good start this year, with a mix of veteran and younger athletes, and all had a great meet.

"I think we're having a great meet today," said Alton head coach Jeff White, "I couldn't be more happier with how things are going, up to this point. We had two pretty good times there in the 100 (meters), with Sam Elliott-Barnes and Cincere Ruffin. Cincere's new to us this year, Sam was on the team last year, he was real impressive, and he's off to a good start. But having Cincere running for the first time in Illinois, he's doing great out there. The 4x100 (relay team) performed pretty good today, as well. So we're pretty excited with how things are moving along."



Ruffin transferred to the Redbirds from Tacoma, Wash. this spring, and has fit in well with his new team. And Alton had a great showing in a state-championship caliber meet as well.

"So for us, this meet, and I hype it up to the kids that this is basically, like the state track meet," White said. "The quality of team that are here, the quality of performances that are here, this is basically like a practice state championship meet. And so, we come out here today, we want to see exactly where we're at, so the next six weeks, we can figure out where we need to improve on, get inspired to work a little bit harder, and get it figured out by the middle of next month."

So far, so good, and White is loving how the progress of his team is going right along.

"I love it," White said with a smile. "I think this meet is fantastic. It's one of my favorite ones on the year. I mean, it's a very, very hard meet, but you know exactly where you stand in the rest of the state."

Needless to say, White is feeling optimistic about how things will turn out for his team, and is looking ahead to the coming weeks and meets ahead.

"Absolutely," White said. "I think we've got the pieces, we've just got to put them all together. Just keep an eye out on us this year, I think we're going to be turning heads by May."

Elliott-Barnes finished seventh in the 100 meters with a time of 10.97 seconds, with Ruffin placing in 15th with a time of 11.14 seconds. Elliott-Barnes' winning time in the 200 meters was 21.83 seconds, with Ruffin finishing 10th at 22.51 seconds, and Alex Macias had a time of 53.50 seconds in the 400 meters.

Hank McClaine had a time in the 800 meters of 2:05.05, with teammate Noah Gallivan right behind at 2:05.09. Ben Helfrich had a time in the 1,600 meters of 5:01.55, and Devon Yowell came home in the 3,200 meters at 11:40.14.

In the hurdles races, Alphonso Fletcher ran the 110 meters at 17.67 seconds, while Charlie McAfoos had a time in the 300 meters of 43.64 seconds, and Fletcher came in at 47.33 seconds. In the relays, the 4x100 meter team came in sixth at 43.19 seconds, the 4x200 meter team was in at 1:33.66, in the 4x400 meters, the Redbirds had a time of 3:36.19, and the 4x800 meter team was home at 8:41.27.

In the field events, Darian Johnson had a distance in the shot put of 13.47 meters, with Elijah Stuekel having a throw of 11.21 meters. In the discus throw, Johnson finished 10th in the discus throw, having a distance of 41.93 meters, while Spencer Nelson had a toss of 28.43 meters. Jeremiah Blakely had a leap of 5.66 meters, and went 11.24 meters in the triple jump.