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for Roosevelt leaper
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an implosion in 16 frames
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Fair century

Hundred-year-old county
fair invades Oaks Park
— See WEEKEND LIFE, B1

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Roughrider novice takes one giant leap

■ Khino Brackeen, who took up the high jump in April, is PIL champ

By JASON VONDERSMITH
The Tribune

Some people just have the talent. Roosevelt's Khino Brackeen didn't start to compete in the high jump until early April — just hurdling over the bar, basically — and last week he cleared 6 feet, 5 inches to capture the Portland Interscholastic League title.

Brackeen, who attends the alternative Open Meadow High School and competes for the Roughriders, cleared 6-7 the week before.

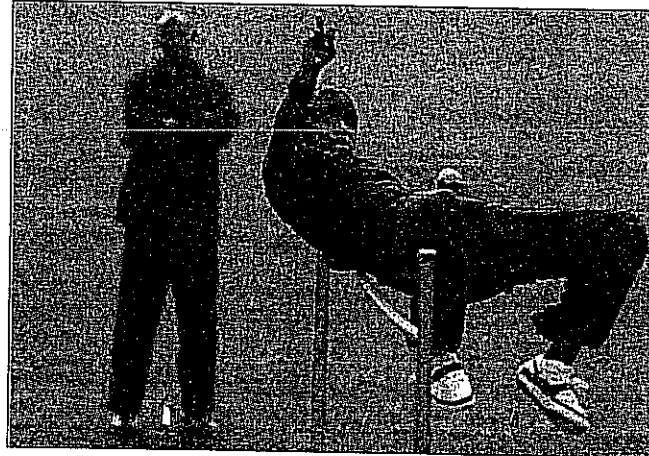
PrepFocus

"If he would have come out the last three years, we would be going after 7 feet," Roosevelt coach Curtis Wilson says. "He's touched the tip of the iceberg. He needs to go to a community college now and get some real instruction."

"He's done nothing to improve on his natural ability. He just jumped over the bar."

On Friday and Saturday, Brackeen, who has transitioned into some use of the Fosbury Flop technique, hopes to conclude his

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Khino Brackeen uses his unorthodox jumping style to clear the bar while coach Curtis Wilson watches.

TRIBUNE PHOTO:
L.E. BASKOW

Leap: State title is the next goal

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prep career with the state title in the Class 4A track and field meet at Eugene. Then he wants to compete for Mt. Hood Community College or another school.

"It's interesting to think," he says, "that they're going to pay me to go to college if I go over a bar."

Four 4A competitors, led by Hillsboro's Billy Butler (6-9), have gone higher than Brackeen in the high jump this year. But nobody came close to beating him in the city, as he became Roosevelt's first PFL high jump champ since 1980.

Not bad for somebody not even 6 feet tall. He's 5-10 — "with crazy hops," says Sierra Hill, an Open Meadow teacher advocate. "He's always the first pick in (recreational) volleyball."

Brackeen played basketball at Open Meadow, the North Portland school he has attended the past two years, after two years at Roosevelt. Just to do something active in his final days of high school, rather than skateboard all afternoon, Brackeen decided to walk back over to Roosevelt and try to high jump.

"We've never had high jumpers here," says Wilson, who had 13 track and field athletes at season's end.

The coach has worked with Brackeen on steps and clearing the bar.

"It's coming," Wilson says.

"He's so high, he doesn't worry about (the flop)."

Brackeen now can clear the bar with his back, arching somewhat, and swinging his legs over. He figures if he can refine the technique this week, he might win state.

Born in Atlanta, Brackeen says he lived in Oklahoma briefly with his family. He lives in St. Johns now, staying between his girlfriend's home and his stepfather's place. He says that attending Roosevelt wasn't very inspiring, and he got turned off by the emphasis on socializing among students there. "They never talked about college here," he says, sitting in the Roosevelt hallway. "It was, 'When do we graduate?'"

"I'd like to go to college, where I can get smarter, which can make me more money."

Hill remembers that Brackeen was withdrawn when he arrived at Open Meadow. But he has excelled in the alternative learning methods and writes poetry often.

"He's definitely got a better feeling of himself," she says. "He's very committed. He's very much into himself and learning, and not grades."

Brackeen calls himself "an adrenaline junkie" who skateboards and snowboards and loves cliff diving and amusement rides. As a kid, Brackeen remembers jumping off a porch and over a bush at his family home, and jumping over the fence at a friend's house.

According to former Roosevelt coach Dan Malone, the last PFL high jump champ at the school was Everett Jack Jr. in 1980. The last individual PFL champ of any kind from Roosevelt was in the early 1990s, by Malone's recollection.

Says Brackeen: "I never knew it would come to this. Now I want to win the first-place medal in the state meet."

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Portland Tribune

PrepWatch

June 2, 2006

Short-term jumper scores for Roosevelt

Roosevelt's Khino Brackeen, the senior who won the PFL boys high jump title after little more than a month of doing the event, finished eighth at last week's state meet, earning a point for the Roughriders. He was bummed, though, because he missed all three attempts at 6-4 after he cleared both 6-0 and 6-2 on his second attempts.

It had to be a test of nerves for him to jump at historic Hayward Field in front of several thousand people and with the best and more experienced preps from around the state.

"No matter how much you prepare, your first time here isn't easy," Roosevelt coach Curtis Wilson says, "and the wet weather didn't help us at all. When he made 6-7 at Roosevelt, it was on a nice day."

Wilson is trying to keep Brackeen motivated.

"I'm pushing him to go to Mt. Hood Community College and jump, or Clackamas," the coach says. "He could be a sprinter there, too. He needs to go to a community college and kick butt for two years and then move on. And he needs to realize that his season is just starting. Hopefully he'll jump in the State Games and some all-comers meets."

Brackeen, who attends Open Meadow, an alternative high school in North Portland (which doesn't have its own track program), will bring the school's student services coordinator, Dion Jordan, to tonight's Portland Beaver baseball game as part of the team's Kids Honor Day at PCC Park. Some 7,500 Portland-area students are bringing a fa-

vorite teacher, parent or guardian as their guest.