

Walnut Grove grabs girls' title



Walnut Grove's Hannah Rolfe clears the bar during her high jump attempt at the B.C. high school track and field championships at Burnaby's Swangard Stadium. Rolfe, a Grade 8 student, placed fifth in the competition.

Gord Goble

By [Gary Ahuja - Langley Times](#)

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It took a total team effort and in the end, the Walnut Grove Gators were rewarded with a provincial championship banner.

The Gators won the senior girls' team title at the B.C. high school provincial track and field championships, which were held Friday and Saturday at Burnaby's Swangard Stadium.

“It was just a fabulous performance by everybody,” said Don Sparks, one of several coaches who oversee the Walnut Grove track and field program.

“It was a culmination of five years for a lot of those girls,” added Gary Lutes.

“We hit everything we needed to put ourselves in that position.”

Walnut Grove scored 71.5 points, 11.5 ahead of perennial powerhouse Oak Bay, which had won nine of the previous 10 senior girls’ titles. That string was interrupted by the Gators, who tied for the title in 2005 with Burnaby Central.

“We usually come in second with the girls, but we looked at (Oak Bay’s) entries and thought maybe they are vulnerable, so we threw everything we had at them,” Sparks said.

That included moving Grade 8 athlete Hannah Rolfe up to the senior level, where she finished tied for fifth in the high jump, earning the Gators points.

In track and field, athletes earn points for placing in the top 10, with 10 points for a first-place and one point for a tenth-place result.

Meg Harradine ran four events — the 400 and 800m and both the 4x100 and 4 x400 relays — whereas she normally would have focused on just a couple of events, while Danica Matson, did heptathlon for the first time this year, and she placed fifth in the event.

Shelby Smithson also earned points for her bronze in the high jump and her fourth-place finish in the heptathlon.

Combining all the Walnut Grove top 10 finishes with the performance of Ashley Windsor — who won two gold and a silver — plus the Gators’ silver in the 4x400 relay, helped put the school comfortably ahead of Oak Bay.

Walnut Grove also finished third in the aggregate standings with 77.83 points.

“Everything fell into place and we did get lucky,” Sparks said, referring to a couple of disqualifications from Oak Bay athletes, resulting in no points in those particular events.

“It was just a great weekend and I am excited for them,” Lutes said, adding it will be very beneficial for the younger Gator athletes to have this provincial championship experience under their belts.