

# Wright has point to prove at CC



Mike McCollum/R-P file

Mike Wright has qualified for the CCS finals in three events.

Thanks for  
all your work  
for T+F!!

Hank — see attached  
this + MY good notes  
of Top 8 all night 1992  
is all I've got!  
Refer to Mike

# NMC standout out to defend long-jump title

By DAVID BURGE  
STAFF WRITER

**M**IKE WRIGHT found himself in an unusual situation this year.

Wright, a senior track and field standout at North Monterey County High, is the defending Central Coast Section champion in the long jump, yet he's felt like he's had to prove something all season.

"A lot of people thought it was a fluke that I won it last year," Wright said. "They said, 'He just did it once. It's not going to happen again.' I wanted to show that I could do it and be consistent at those marks."

Going into CCS last year, Wright was expected to contend for the section title in the triple jump, which was his best event at the time. He was coming off a Region IV title in the triple jump the week before; he placed third at Region in the long jump.

Instead, he fooled a lot of track aficionados by winning the long jump with a leap of 22 feet, 11½ inches. In the process, he shattered the school record by nine inches and his own personal-best by almost two feet.

This season, Wright has tried his best to live up to what he feels a CCS champion should be all about. Wright had the top qualifying mark in the long jump at the CCS trials Saturday with a jump of 23-1½. He looks like a solid bet to defend his title at the section finals tomorrow at San Jose City College (4 p.m.).

"During the first two weeks of practice, I was thinking about CCS," Wright, 18, said. "It was in the back of my mind that I've got to do it again."

So far, his season has been everything he could have possibly hoped for. At league, he won the high jump and the long jump for the second year in a row. He finished second in the 100 meters to Santa Cruz's Nate

Bell and was fourth in the triple jump.

In addition to the long jump, he qualified for the CCS finals in the high jump and the 100. He might have qualified in a fourth event — the triple jump — but a nagging heel injury hampered him at sub-section last week, and he had to scratch during the event.

All this success, coupled with

his versatility, have Condor coaches singing his praises.

"Well simply, he's the most outstanding track-and-field athlete we've ever had, and we've had some good ones," NMC head coach Roger O'Sullivan said. "Even though we're a young school, we have a pretty good track tradition.

"Mike's also mild-mannered and leads by example. He's quietly

confident, and he's really team oriented, too."

Wright is often compared to former NMC great Robert Myles, who was the CCS 400-meter champion in 1987. O'Sullivan said that Wright's versatility gives him a slight edge over Myles for the mythical title of greatest Condor track athlete.

"Robert was purely a sprinter and a great one, while Mike is just so versatile," O'Sullivan said.

Wright was surprised when told of O'Sullivan's comments.

"We've had a lot of great track athletes here, like Robert Myles," Wright said. "I don't look at it like that. I don't even think about who's the best. I just try to compete and do my best."

Perhaps Wright's best performance of the year came at the Top 8 Meet earlier this month. He popped a personal-best mark of 23-9½ in the long jump. Ironically, it wasn't enough to win the competition. Carlmont's Paul Bradford finished first with a 23-10, which he did on his last jump.

Bradford figures to be Wright's chief competition again tomorrow.

"I feel pretty confident," Wright said. "Bradford is a good jumper. He's consistently in the 23s, and he pops them over and over and over again. That's what I have to do — be consistent."

While Wright has his sights

set on winning another CCS long-jump title, he's also hoping to finish in the top three in the high jump. The top three finishers at CCS earn the right to advance to the state championships, June 5 and 6 at Cerritos College in Norwalk.

His best mark in the high jump this year has been 6-8, at the SCCAL meet.

"Personally, I'd like to go 24 feet in the long jump and 6-10 in the high jump," he said, "and qualify to state in both."

As for the state championships, Wright also feels that he has some unfinished business to attend to there. Last year, he was sick at the state meet and didn't qualify for finals in the long jump. He finished 20th with a jump of 22 feet.

"I jumped 22 feet, and it was barely enough for them to even measure, because they weren't measuring anything under 22 feet," he said.

Obviously, Wright would like to do a little better.

"Last year, I was sick and had to come home early," he said. "So, I'd like to go again and enjoy myself and try to make it to the second day of competition. I want to let them know that North County is there."

Off the track, Wright is a soft-spoken individual who is well-liked by his teammates. He is also a devout Christian.

"I pray before every event," he said. "The Lord helps me with all my events, and I give Him all my credit. I admire other athletes like Carl Lewis, but I give all my credit to the Lord. He's the one that makes it happen."

Wright will probably attend Hartnell College in Salinas next year. He said he hopes to work with veteran Panther coach Gary Shaw in learning the decathlon.

Eventually, he'd like to attend a four-year school, where he can continue his track career. Many track observers in the area think that if Wright puts in the necessary work, he could be a world-class decathlete.

"The decathlon is based on being a sprinter/jumper," Wright said. "That's what they start out as. You have to be fast. You have to be able to hurdle. You have to be able to sprint and jump. You have to be strong for the weight events and the pole vault. And you have to have a little endurance for the mile."