

## MAGIC

Authored By Bill Mephram

Freshman Sophia Romeri stood in the night air with the hopes of Lincoln-Sudbury's girls track team on her shoulders. The bulk of the crowd that had attended the All-State track meet had long since left, leaving the pole vaulters and their spectators, as well as L-S and Bromfield High School supporters and athletes, to witness the dramatic finish to the meet's competition. For L-S to win, they needed at least a second place in the pole vault, and five girls had already cleared 10 feet, with Sophia down to her last jump at that height.

There was a touch of magic in the air all day long for the Lincoln-Sudbury girl's track team. The team was a long shot to win the team competition, as they were only able to qualify six athletes from the Class A meet: senior captain Fiona Romeri, four sophomores, and a freshman. The preliminary projections had them at 15th out of over 150 schools that had at least one athlete that had qualified. They had a chance, but everything had to go perfectly for the team to win. They needed a little magic.

Sophomore Emily Mephram set the tone as the first athlete from L-S to compete. The top eight finishers in an event score points on a 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 scale. As the eighth seed, Emily was projected to earn a single point. Instead she chose the biggest meet of the year to run a 2:17 personal record, holding off a Bromfield competitor for third place and a huge six points for the team. With those six points the hint of magic first tinged the air.

L-S next caught a break in the 400 as the top seed, Aranxta King of Medford, scratched from the event in order to concentrate on the triple jump and protect a balky hamstring. Sophomore Dana Jameison capitalized on this change and moved up from the fifth seed in the race and finished in fourth, earning the team another five points, increasing the team total to eleven.

And there it would stay until the end of the meet, as the only other events in which L-S was entered were the last two events of the day: the 4 by 400 relay and the pole vault. L-S watched and waited as DCL rivals Newton South and Acton Boxboro ran up points, as did Bridgewater-Raynham and Bromfield.

Bromfield placed second in the 4x800 relay to finish up their scoring for the day with 28 points, and a two point lead over the indoor state track champion Acton-Boxboro. L-S watched the next relay anxiously as Acton-Boxboro toed the line, for A-B had the second seeded 4x100 team and was looking to put the meet out of reach. Magic struck again, however this time it was a dark magic. A-B's Jill Crowley tragically pulled a hamstring during the race and A-B finished out of the running, dashing their title hopes and ending a brilliant afternoon for the A-B team.

Bromfield next had to worry about the 4x400 relay, as it featured the top seed Bridgewater-Raynham, and a win by B-R would have put them in first place by a point. Bromfield was unaware of the true danger, for L-S was nowhere on the leader board at that time. L-S had to make up 17 points in just two events to overtake Bromfield, and maybe more to defeat Bridgewater-Raynham. It was a tall order. The 4x400 relay team was seeded fifth, quite an accomplishment for a group of sophomores, but still a far cry from what was necessary for the title.

For the third time in the meet, the L-S girls exceeded expectations, and this time in a big way. Molly Binder had to give L-S a strong first leg for them to be in contention, and she delivered. Emily Mepham took the second leg and, in a surprise move by B-R, was running against B-R's best runner, Mary Zolga, the third place finisher in the open 400. Emily handed the baton off solidly in second place, to Olivia Reed who held onto the strong second position, but by this time B-R had opened a gap between first and second. B-R, however, had already used its best runner in an earlier leg, while L-S had their strongest 400 runner, Dana Jamieson, on the anchor. Coming down the home stretch Jamieson was quickly closing the gap, but she also had to contend with the open 400 first place finisher from Stoneham who was by that time right on her shoulder in third place. In a heroic surge Dana held off the Stoneham runner and caught the B-R runner at the tape in the closest race of the day, winning by 4/100's of a second over B-R, with Stoneham six tenths behind in third. Bridgewater-Raynham had to settle for second, coming up one point short in their effort to overtake Brownfield. Four sophomores had won the state 4x400 relay title.

L-S now had 21 points, and needed 8 points in the pole vault to claim the title. The pole vault had been a strength of L-S all year, but the All-State meet was crowded with athletes who had jumped as high as the Romer sisters, with personal bests at ten feet and over. Fiona Romer, the senior who was the class A pole vault champion and hero of class A meet for L-S, had bowed out early at nine feet six inches.

So L-S's hopes rested with Fiona's freshman sister Sophia. With five competitors already over at ten feet and Sophia down to her last jump, those hopes were dwindling. The stadium lights had turned on, and a hush fell over the remaining crowd. Sophia approached the bar - and cleared it to raucous applause.

This, however still left her in sixth place on the basis of having more misses at the last height cleared. Sophia, as the lowest remaining seed, led off at ten feet six inches. After all competitors missed their first attempts, Sophia nailed her second attempt and the L-S contingent burst into cheers. The remaining five competitors still had two chances to clear the height, and one by one they missed. And missed again.

There was a stunned pause as enormity of what had occurred sunk in, and then the night was punctuated by a cry of "Sophia!", and the L-S crowd rushed to mob the freshman, and hoist her onto their shoulders. In a surreal setting, L-S celebrated late at night in a nearly empty stadium, receiving the state championship trophy from the officials, reluctant to leave and have the moment vanish.

Lincoln-Sudbury had won the state title, with all of the points being scored by four sophomores and a freshman. Magic.