

Hamilton track winner branches out

Junior Bracey adds cross-country race to wide repertoire

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The training conditions for the winter track team at Hamilton aren't exactly ideal. With the cold weather, and the gym being almost always occupied by basketball teams, the Red Raiders usually practice in a bit of an unconventional way.

"We practice most of our events in the cafeteria," coach Rich MacLeish said. "We just drag mats in there and practice our high jump. For hurdles, we set up two consecutive in the hallway. The athletes really only face five in a row for the first time at actual meets."

This may not sound like the best environment to train in, but junior Tre Bracey believes it only prepares him more for real events.

"I don't view it as an obstacle," Bracey said. "If anything, it helps because you're mentally prepared for anything to happen. It's not a comfortable situation, but when you grow too comfortable, you don't do so well because you get used to it."

That unfamiliar feeling was a driving force for Bracey at the Rockland Coaches Invitational on Jan. 9. He won the long jump with a distance of 19 feet 10 inches. He also placed sixth out of 18 competitors in the high jump (5-6).

Winning those events felt good and were the result of hard work, but Bracey isn't satisfied yet.

In fact, when it comes to track and field events, Bracey hasn't stopped at much of anything.

This fall season, he ran cross-country to build his endurance.

In just his first season trying distance running, Bracey finished in 12th place at the sectionals and earned all-league honors.

MacLeish admits that he wanted Bracey to try cross-country as a way to become more well-rounded, but isn't at all surprised with how well he's done.

"The running joke is that



Hamilton's Tre Bracey competes in the high jump event at the 2009 Loucks Games.

he can do anything," MacLeish said.

"He wanted to do hurdles? Three days later he would be making some of the fastest times I've seen. He tries high jump, and after a week of hitting his head on the bar, he's clearing 5 feet. He's just amazing."

Past showings have proved Bracey has tons of potential and, midway through his junior year, he seems bound for

greatness.

Other track and field athletes usually focus on one or two things. But Bracey just couldn't limit himself because he is fascinated with becoming a complete package.

"I wanted to stick to just one or two events at first," he said. "But the more and more I tried new things, I found success and I just got into them."

In last spring's Class C competition, Bracey finished third overall, just one spot short of all-section, with times

of 11.9 seconds in the 100 meters, 26.8 in the 200 meters and 17.8 in the hurdles.

Keeping in mind that it was still his first season and first sectional appearance, MacLeish expects Bracey to blow those times away this spring.

"He's a strong athlete," MacLeish said. "There's a lot practice that has to be coordinated in, and that you have to learn."

"I think he's got it and has shown a lot of progression. All signs point at him getting better," he said.