

2023 DIVISION 1 100 METER DASH STATE CHAMPION **ELIJAH BROWN, TOMAH**



Final step puts Tomah's top speedster atop the state podium



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One one-hundredth of a second. That tiny fraction of time can seem so insignificant. Think of how many of them passed just reading these past few sentences. But for Tomah junior Elijah Brown, that minuscule moment is all the difference it took to make him a state champion.

Brown placed first in the Division 1 boys' 100-meter dash at this year's state track meet, his winning time of 10.77 seconds just barely edging out Green Bay Southwest senior Lyndon Hemmrich-Hartman's second-place mark of 10.78 seconds. Hemmrich-Hartman was the defending state champion in the event, winning it in 2022 while representing Oshkosh North.

As one would expect given the razor-thin margin of victory, it wasn't immediately clear who had won when the pack of competitors hit the finish line. After a few seconds, Brown's name popped up in first on the board at Roger Harring Stadium.

Brown's celebration was a simple and subdued one: a quick point to the sky in gratitude.

"I just felt so thankful because I worked really hard for it," Brown said. "I honestly thought Lyndon had it. I really did think he had it. But I guess not. It was really close."

That dramatic win marked the greatest moment yet for Brown in what's been a meteoric rise during his high school track career. In his second appearance at state, he went from being eliminated in the prelims to winning a gold medal in the span of a year.

Brown was a member of the Tomah track team right from the start as a freshman but ended that first season unsatisfied with where he was at with his sprints. He put in work over the summer of 2021 to improve his form and it helped pave the way for him qualifying for state as a sophomore in 2022 in both the 100- and 200-meter dashes.

Brown's state debut didn't quite go as he hoped. He finished 15th in the 100-meter dash prelims and 18th in the 200-meter dash prelims, eliminating him from both fields and causing Brown to miss out on the opportunity to run in the finals the following day.



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However, simply being at state and experiencing what it's all about the first time better prepared him for the environment the next time around.

"Honestly, I just knew what to expect," Brown said of his second time running at state. "Last year, I had no idea what it was like going into it."

Brown's work on honing in his skills continued on into the summer following his sophomore year. He noted that he did more track-specific leg workouts that were focused on increasing his flexibility rather than just strength.

Additionally, sophomore Alex Boyko (who suffered a hamstring injury at sectionals that robbed him of a chance to qualify for state) joined the Timberwolves for the 2023 track season and was able to push Brown in his sprints — a factor that Brown was quick to point out as being key in his continued progression.

That all helped raise his level further during his junior season, but that's not to say everything went smoothly this spring. Some hamstring issues cropped up for Brown in early May that hampered him and caused a 10th-place finish in the 100-meter dash (12.74 seconds) at the Mississippi Valley Conference meet on May 13.

However, Brown recovered well enough to place first in the 100-meter dash and second in the 200-meter dash at both regionals and sectionals.

"For him to kinda bounce back throughout regionals and sectionals and to continue to get faster was really impressive to watch," said Tomah head coach Collin Eswein. "The times that he was posting with a hammy that I know, and I think he knows, isn't 100 percent was tremendous."

That set the stage for Brown to compete at the 2023 WIAA State Track & Field Championships, held Friday, June 2 and Saturday, June 3 at Veterans Memorial Stadium Complex in La Crosse.

Due to a pair of weather delays on Friday, Brown had to wait until about 9:45 p.m. to run in the 100-meter prelims and around midnight for the 200-meter prelims. Under the cover of darkness, he won both his heats and was second overall in each event's prelims with times of 10.84 and 21.57 seconds.

Brown came into state seeded sixth in the 100-meter dash and ninth in the 200-meter dash based on sectional times, but his preliminary race performances made it clear he was gunning for a spot at or near the top of the medalist podium in both.

Brown lived up to that potential on Saturday, earning his first-place finish in the 100 and posting a time of 21.66 seconds in the 200-meter dash to place third overall in that race.

"It makes me want to improve more and makes me not satisfied," Brown said of his third-place performance in the 200. "I want to win state in the 100 and 200 (as a senior) and at least win a meet in the 400 — I want to improve myself in that aspect. And then I want to try to make it to state in the long jump as well."

Brown knows there's still more out there for him to accomplish during his senior season in 2024. But regardless of what happens next, he's already ensured his place in the record books among that exclusive club of state champions.

That's just how much a single hundredth of a second can truly mean.

