

Geiger sweeps Yorks en route to Notre Dame

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Natalie Geiger was elated to win her fourth consecutive York Region Athletic Association 400 metre title at Tuesday's regional outdoor track and field championships at York University.

The 17-year-old Grade 12 Stouffville District Secondary School student was surprised she eclipsed the regional record with her time of 55.57 seconds.

Still, Geiger knows her timing requires fine-tuning.

If she wants to make a return appearance at the World Junior Track and Field Championships in Bydgoszcz, Poland from July 8 to 13, she must meet a standard time of 55.24.

She's confident she'll do that by the June deadline. She'll get a chance at the Central Regional high school championships May 29 and 30 back at York.

A top-four finish there qualifies her for the Ontario final in Hamilton June 5 to 7.

"It's still early in the year. This was just the first preparation meet for OFSAA," she said. "I just want to train well and improve my times. But I hope to make it next week (at the Central Regionals)."

Geiger, who moved to the University of Toronto Track and Field Club after

her coach, Bill Gaidner, retired, said her ultimate goal this year is to run the 400m in the low-to-mid 53-second mark at the World Juniors.

She also won the 100m at the York meet in 12.43.

Intending to run the 100m at the Central Regionals, Geiger will likely drop it if she were to qualify for OFSAA in favour of the 200m. She won that event, too, in Thursday's second day of the York championships in a time of 24.79.

The 200m York title was her third during her time at Stouffville Secondary. Winning the race as a Grade 9 and 10 student, she dropped the distance last year in favour of the 800m as a means of training for endurance.

The three golds make for a grand exit from Stouffville en route to Notre Dame in Indiana and a scholarship this fall.

"It was a tough decision. It could have gone either way (to go Notre Dame or remain in Canada). But I wanted to go somewhere different," she said.

"It's nice that Notre Dame is only an eight-hour drive away from home," she said. "It's a smaller school and I like the community feel it has. They're really supportive of their athletic programs and academics."

The school is making upgrades to its facilities, including a new track.

Overall, Stouffville finished fourth overall out of 39 schools in the region.

Individual highlights Thursday among the boys' team included Dan Coskun setting a regional record in the senior discus after winning the event with a toss of 44.08 metres.

Liam Mitro set a school record by winning the midget 800m in 2:10.04.

The Grade 9 student also won the discus with a toss of 33.59m.

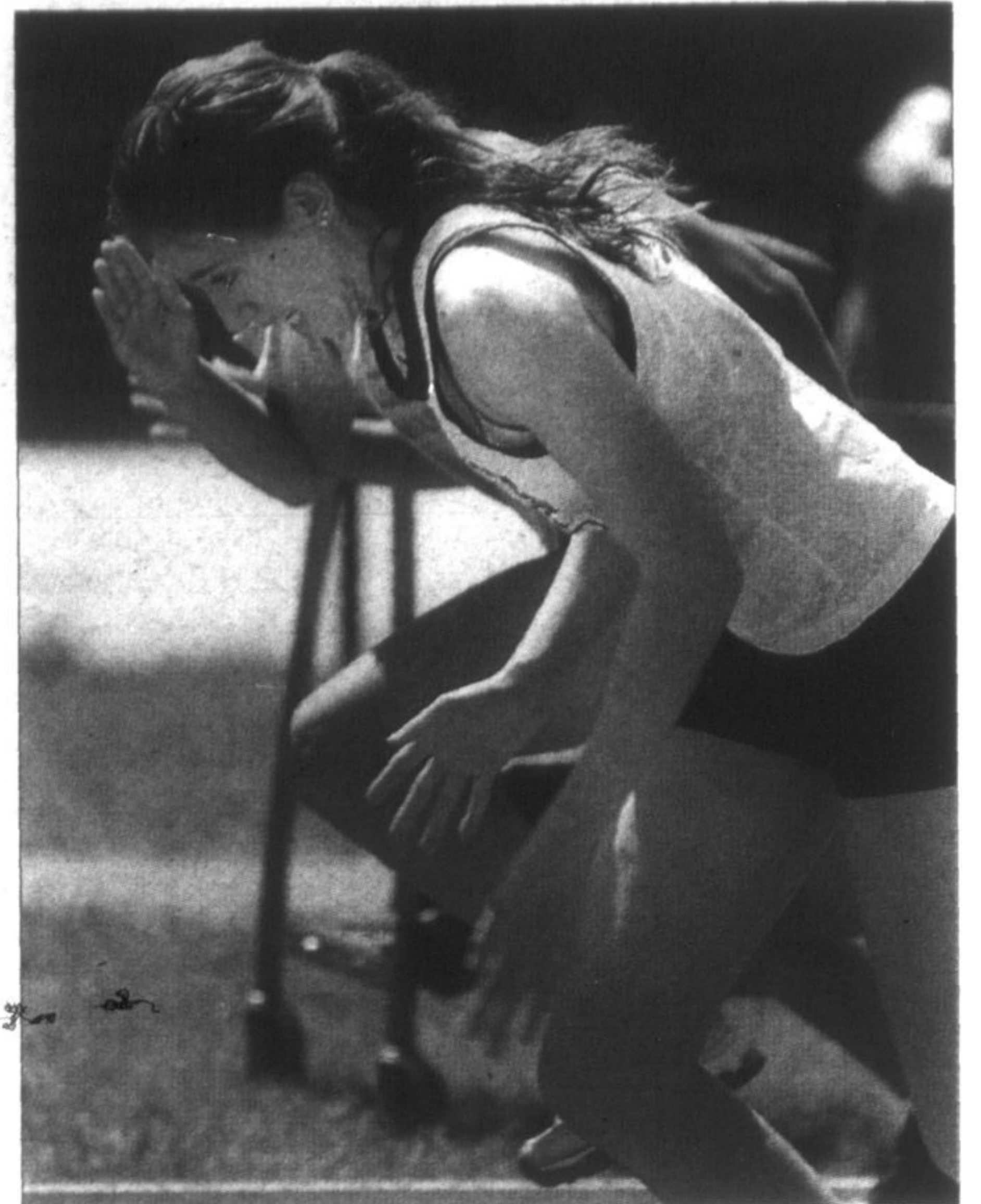
Michael Bourgeois set a school record in the midget 3,000m after finishing third with a time of 9:46.00.

Chris Daniels qualified for the Central Regionals after placing third in the midget 200m in a school record time of 24.94 and fourth in the long jump.

Other regional qualifiers included John Reesor, who finished fourth in the senior high jump and Evan Malcolm, fourth in junior high jump and discus.

In girls' field, Emily Clarkson won the midget javelin with a toss of 26.15m and the shot put with a toss of 8.18m.

Rebecca Muir qualified for the Centrals after finishing fifth in the senior javelin and Laura Lehming, fifth junior javelin.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Natalie Geiger of Stouffville District Secondary School jumps out of the blocks as she wins the 100 m at the York Region high school track and field championships at York University Tuesday. She won two other races in the meet.

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