

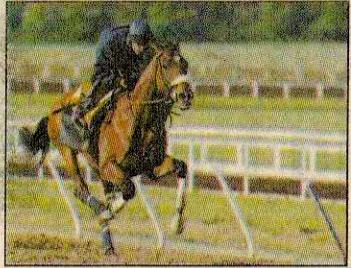
**MIDDLEBROOKS
BACK WITH BRONCOS**
Page 3



WILD WEST SHOW

No. 6 Ducks face No. 8 Oilers tonight. • Page 3

**IRL'S KANAAN LEADS
ANDRETTI'S TEAM**
Page 6



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Preakness favorite Barbaro and assistant trainer Peter Brette breezed through a workout.

Barbaro carries burden of favorite

By DICK JERARDI
KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

BALTIMORE • The Kentucky Derby was about 20 horses. The Preakness is about one horse.

It is almost always that way — unless Giacomo wins the Derby. Barbaro is decidedly not Giacomo.

Last year's Derby winner was a fluke. Nobody expected Giacomo to win the Preakness, any more than they expected him to win the Derby.

After Barbaro won this Derby by the largest margin in 60 years, the long, lean colt has created expectations.

Roy and Gretchen Jackson always sat on their couch watching the Triple Crown races and the Breeders' Cup, wondering if they ever would get to be on television instead of watching television. As the Jacksons were on their way to the Churchill Downs winner's circle on May 6, Gretchen turned to her husband and said, "Well, we're not on the couch this year."

And they won't be on the couch Saturday. They will be in the box seats overlooking the finish line at Pimlico, just across the track from the cupola beyond the winner's circle.

On her way to the track one day in Kentucky, Gretchen found a four-leaf clover. She didn't keep it. She fed it to Barbaro.

The Jacksons never heard "My Old Kentucky Home" at the Derby, such was the traffic trying to get from the paddock to the box seats. In fact, only 18 of the horses were on the track when the song ended.

SEE PREAKNESS • PAGE 2

HIGH SCHOOL TRACK AND FIELD | STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS



Now that Widefield senior Nyeisha Wright is no longer living dangerously in your life," the father told his daughter during a photo shoot Thursday, "and I'm still carrying you." HUNTER MCRAE, THE GAZETTE

Life back on track

COMPARING TRIPLE JUMPS

State record (outdoors), 41 feet, 2 inches, Nyeisha Wright, Widefield High School, 2006

High school national record (outdoors), 44-11/4, Brittany Daniels, Tracy, Calif., 2004

College national record (outdoors), 46-2, Candice Baucham, UCLA, 2005

American record (indoors), 46-8/4, Sheila Hudson, 1995

American record (outdoors), 47-5, Tiombe Hurd, 2004

World record (indoors), 50-4/4, Tatyana Lebedeva, Russia, 2004

World record (outdoors), 50-10/4, Inessa Kravets, Ukraine, 1995

SOURCES: USA Track and Field, Track and Field News, and the NCAA

INSIDE

- Cheyenne Mountain wins 4A girls' soccer quarterfinal.
- Two Rampart relays qualify for finals in 5A boys' swim meet.

Page 5



DAVID BITTON, THE GAZETTE
Widefield's Nyeisha Wright

Move to Colorado helps Wright excel

By NICK WALTER
THE GAZETTE

Almost four years ago, Nyeisha Wright opened the doors at Widefield on her first day of high school and, after a brief examination, had one lingering thought — you've got to be kidding.

There were isolated groups: skaters, cheerleaders, gothics, jocks, nerds. The school seemed scrubbed to a shine. Rules restricted freedom. Outside, neighborhoods were quiet enough to scream.

"It felt like jail," Wright said. Where she grew up, many wound up in confinement. Raised on 54th Street in Brooklyn, N.Y., Wright was immersed in a culture of fast times, live streets and gang activity.

Her mother remarried and left when Wright was 4. Her father Corey Wright, then stationed in Colorado Springs as a chemical specialist for the Army and now with a distributing company, made a decision

SCHEDULE Class 3A and 2A

Today and Saturday, 9:30 a.m., Dutch Clark Stadium

Class 5A and 4A

Today and Saturday, 9:30 a.m., Jefferson County Stadium

SEE WRIGHT • PAGE 4

NBA Playoffs | L.A. Clippers 118, Phoenix 106

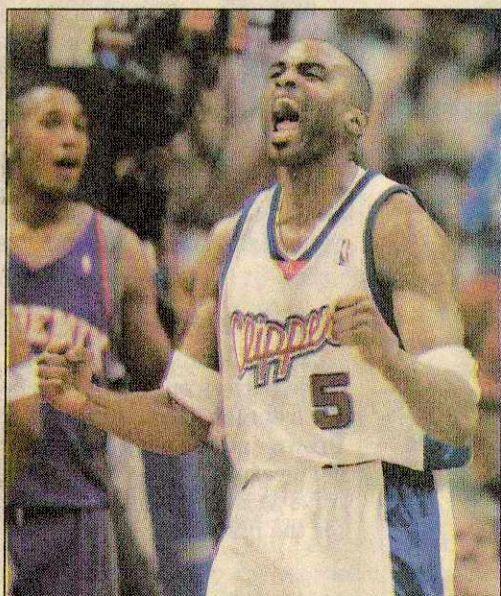
Clippers force Game 7

By JOHN NADEL
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES • Elton Brand had 30 points and 12 rebounds, Corey Maggette came off the bench to score 13 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter, and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Suns 118-106 Thursday night to even the Western Conference semifinal series at three games apiece.

Phoenix's players seemed a step slower than usual at times; they have played every other day since April 26 — a total of 12 games in 22 days.

They'll get some time off now, because Game 7 isn't until Monday night in Phoenix, where the second-seeded Suns beat the sixth-



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cuttino Mobley and the Clippers defended home court Thursday against the Suns.

SEE NBA • PAGE 7

New Orleans 9, Sky Sox 8

Bullpen blows shot at win for Sky Sox

By BOB STEPHENS
THE GAZETTE



TODAY
New Orleans (Billy Taber 2-1, 3.41 ERA) at Sky

Sox (Mike Esposito 2-2, 4.05), 7:05 p.m., 1240 AM

A bullpen breakdown ruined homecoming for the Colorado Springs Sky Sox, who lost 9-8 to New Orleans after blowing a five-run lead Thursday.

The Sky Sox were back at Security Service Field after winning six of eight on the road and seemingly had another victory in hand before giving up five runs in the eighth inning.

"We've been playing well, and we did tonight," Sky Sox manager Tom Runnells said. "Two relievers just couldn't

get the job done. That was a tough one."

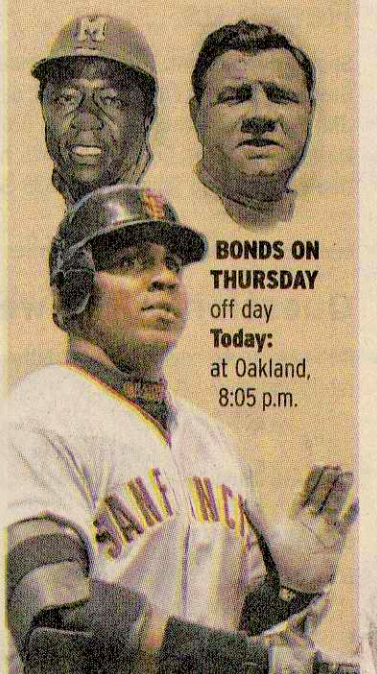
The crowd of 2,345 saw the Sky Sox take a 5-1 lead in the second. It was 6-1 after the fifth and 8-4 after the seventh.

But Sky Sox reliever Steve Colyer, who walked three in his previous one-inning appearance, walked the first two

SEE SKY SOX • PAGE 9

HOME RUN WATCH

Hank Aaron	Babe Ruth	Barry Bonds
755	714	713



BONDS ON THURSDAY
off day
Today:
at Oakland,
8:05 p.m.

High Schools



Go to gazettepreps.com for even more high school sports coverage. Stories. Statistics. Schedules.

WRIGHT: Senior may win 4 state titles

FROM PAGE 1

that altered his daughter's life.

"She was running with the wrong crowd at one time," Corey Wright said. "Some gang affiliation stuff. She told me about that; I told her it's time to come on to Colorado."

Everything else, it turned out, was state track and field history. At last Friday's Class 4A regional, the senior had the longest triple jump — 41 feet, 2 inches — in the history of Colorado high school girls.

Wright expects to bust more barriers at this weekend's state meet at Jefferson County Stadium. Four state titles are not unlikely. She hopes to add another triple jump championship and titles in the long jump and the 100- and 400-meter dashes.

She took second at state last spring in the 400 and third in the 200 and long jump. She has the nation's top long jump mark (20-3) this season, according to USA Today.

To be sure, Wright loves Brooklyn — it is her home. But she's glad her dad took her away.

"Where I would have been today?" Wright considered. "Probably still be in a gang, wouldn't be in track. Failing class. Maybe worse."

ROUGH START

When gun blasts are a block away, bolt for the nearest dumpster. That's what 10-year-old Wright and her younger sister by two years, Imeisha, did when they lived with their grandmother, Doris Wright. Their father lived in Colorado Springs.

In the Brooklyn neighborhood of Flatbush, which smelled to Wright like fish-market garbage and buzzed with well-fed insects, streets formed a tight grid. One block away, yelling rang out while the sisters were headed to the store.

They turned. Two gangs faced each other. One man chucked a bottle. Another responded with gunfire. The sisters fled behind a green trash bin. The crews scattered.

Seeing no casualties, the Wrights laughed — it's how they dealt with the unreal.

"It looked so fake," Wright said. "Like out of the movies."

Big-screen-worthy stories were common growing up. The first, when Wright was 5, played out through her youngest sister Antasi.

Tanya Crosby, mother of the three Wright sisters, was driving Antasi from Georgia to Brooklyn.

It was Antasi's first birthday. Somewhere in Virginia, maybe Maryland, Wright recalled, Crosby's phone rang. While she reached for it, the car hit a ditch and flipped. Antasi was in the front seat. During the crash, Antasi's hand was cut off just above the wrist. She now has a prosthetic hand.

"That's the girl I look out for right



DAVID BITTON, THE GAZETTE FILE

Widefield's Nyeisha Wright is expected to compete for 4A titles in the 200-meter dash, 400, triple jump and long jump at this weekend's state championships.

there," Nyeisha said.

At Winthrop Intermediate School, she had to look out for herself. Nobody could be trusted. Nobody except the girls in her clan, "Gangster Thugs For Life." Like a track and field relay, GT4L was four deep, lived a fast life and, as was often the case, what one started, another finished.

Like when Nyeisha fought a boy. "She was handling herself pretty good," said Franchesca Ulyeese, a former member of GT4L. "But that's a boy. Me and my friends had to come in."

When they cut class, cheap thrills were a jaunt away. They'd knock on the doors of houses and run; meet up with loads of students at a friend's house and throw a dance party; play "double-dutch" jump rope in Tilden Park on 54th Street; hang out on the corner of Utica Avenue and Eastern Parkway and "see who has the hottest kicks," Wright said, "the hottest clothes. See what's going on."

Wright knew her limits, for the time being. But there was always a sour feeling of uncertainty.

"In New York City, you're so used to having to watch your back so much, you can't fully enjoy it," Wright said.

Although Wright did just enough to pass most classes, she'd have rather done anything but study in the school she described as grimy with broken windows and spray-painted walls.

"You weren't at school to learn," she said. "Teachers didn't care. Kids

would say, 'Do work? For what?' And they didn't care. If you fail, you fail."

The principal and assistant principal at Winthrop declined to comment on the school's disciplinary actions.

Marge Feinberg, a press officer at the New York City Department of Education, said things have changed since Wright left.

"It's unfortunate (Wright) had that experience," she said. "There's a promotion policy that went into effect after she graduated (from middle school in 2002). It means if you don't meet a certain standard at third, fifth and seventh grade, you get left back until you do."

"We have a very strong curriculum and disciplinary code. We expect respect and give respect in return."

NEW RULES

Wright's first two weeks at Widefield were a molding process.

She already had collected her fourth tardy notice, then detention.

"It was too much. Like being in 'CSI' trying to skip class," Wright said. "Out in New York, a fight was nothing. Here, you're suspended five days, go to court, there's charges, community service, that kind of stuff."

For the nonstop action that used to delight Wright, there seemed to be no immediate fix.

In Brooklyn, track was but an oval around grass. In Widefield, it became part of her life.

"I was totally shocked by her even joining the track team," Corey Wright

said. "I was like, 'OK.' I think they would have looked down on that out (in Brooklyn)."

Wright can't contain her Brooklyn swagger. During a meet this season, Wright led a cheer from the stands, her animated voice booming among a cluster of Widefield blue and silver. Her red-highlighted hair that jets below her often-cocked baseball hat also makes her easy to spot.

But something stands out about this former Brooklyn street-runner.

"You can tell she's a strong person," said Sand Creek's Melanie Schlaak, who often took second to Wright in the 400 and jumps. "If I wasn't cool with her, I probably wouldn't approach her on the street. She'd probably kick my butt."

"THAT COULD'VE BEEN ME . . ."

Not everyone left Brooklyn in time.

A close friend of the Wrights, a 13-year-old boy named Anderson, was one day from a new life at a high school in Georgia. The gang Outlaw he had been running with could have been nothing but childhood silliness.

Last Christmas Eve, walking alone on the same street where Nyeisha and her friends skipped rope, he was killed in a drive-by shooting.

"That could've been me right there," Wright said.

Wright was in the Rockies, making As and Bs in class. She is about to graduate and will attend Southern Mississippi on a full athletic scholarship to compete in track and field.

Likewise, Ulyeese, who became a

cheerleader, will graduate this month from Lafayette High School, where Wright would have attended.

Neither Ulyeese nor Wright have heard from the other GT4L members.

"I don't know what they're doing now," Ulyeese said. "I think it was better for (Nyeisha) probably to come to Colorado."

Dad's decision couldn't have proved more vital.

Three weeks ago, Corey Wright was driving his daughter to prom after she had won four events — 100, 200, long jump, triple jump — at the Ray Campbell Invitational.

He's used to her track success.

Dating may take more time.

"It took a while to get adapted to the boy thing," he said. "You see young dates and still have that parental instinct and everything. 'Boys are evil; stay away from it.' I have firsthand experience on that."

He also has direct experience living in Brooklyn until 17. Football and basketball served as his escape.

He can relate to the drama, the violence, those nights when his daughter would lie awake and hear an average of three to five gun shots before falling asleep.

"Everyone felt their space was in jeopardy," Nyeisha said. "People had to be king of the block."

Wright found a different world, one of relative discipline and peace, where she is queen of the track.

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TRACK AND FIELD | STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sand Creek, Limon poised to win state titles

THE GAZETTE

The Limon girls will look to repeat as Class 2A team champions while Sand Creek has the depth and talent to challenge in the 4A track and field state championships, which start today and continue through Saturday.

The Class 3A and 2A meets will be held at Pueblo's Dutch Clark Stadium starting at 9:30 a.m. both days while the 5A and 4A championships will be held at Jefferson County Stadium.

The Limon boys are the defending 2A champions while the 3A 2005 champions are the Gunnison boys and Platte Canyon girls.

In 4A, the Mullen boys and girls hope to repeat. In 5A, last spring's champions were the Smoky Hill boys and Montbello

girls. Here's a look at the top area hopefuls.

Class 5A

The Wasson boys will have a pair of athletes with legitimate shots at state titles. In the 800-meter run, Carl Arnold, who took fourth in the event last season, should be at the front of the pack with Denver South's Mohamud Ige, who was second last season. Arnold also will be in Wasson's 800 and 1,600 relays.

"When he walked in as a freshman, with his physical attributes and mental capacity, he had good character, I knew he was going to be special," Wasson coach Gerald Owens said. "A lot of kids are real cocky and hard to coach. He came in with a lot of talent, he looked up to the coach and we put it together. I'm proud of that."

Junior Travis Corrow broke Wasson's long jump record twice this season and, with a distance of 23 feet, 11 inches, is the state favorite.

Palmer, the Metro and regional champion, is the area's deepest team. The question remains if the Terrors can be as competitive at state. Doherty's Allie Abdouch was the regional 800 and 1,600 champion. The junior placed eighth in the 800 at state last season.

Class 4A

The Sand Creek girls won their regional by 102 points. That could indicate a possible team title run. They have sprinters, led by Latraia Scott in the 100 and 200; hurdler Jasmine Rollins, regional 300 champion; middle-distance runners Emily Schmidt and Melanie Schlaak, who were first and second, respectively, in the 800 at regionals. Plus they have strong relays: At the regional, the Scorpions won the 400, 800, 1,600 and 3,200.

Widefield's Nyeisha Wright will compete for titles in the 100, 400, long jump and triple jump, in which she set a Colorado all-classifications

record this season and the 4A state meet record last season. She also has the best long jump mark, 20-3, in the nation this season, according to USA Today.

The Cheyenne Mountain girls and boys won regional titles. The girls will showcase strong 800, 1,600 and 3,200 relays. For the boys, Steve Johnson soared over 6-11 in the high jump. He has an excellent chance for a title in the event, as last season's winner, Pueblo West's Brandon Trujillo, cleared 6-7 and has since graduated. The top six placers from last season's triple jump have graduated as well, opening a title opportunity for Fountain-Fort Carson's Calvin Williams, who won at regionals with a jump of 45-6.

Class 3A

St. Mary's Melissa Hadfield is the reigning long jump and triple jump state champion. There's no reason to believe this season's regional champion in both won't repeat. Hadfield also will contend in the 100 meters, in which she was fifth at state last season.

The Classical Academy's Emily Hanenburg is one of the favorites to win the 1,600. The senior could be destined for a close finish with Centauri senior Janette McCarroll in the 800. McCarroll placed first last season, less than a second ahead of Hanenburg. On the boys' side, Colorado Springs Christian School's Chad Gibson could grab an 800 run title, where he is the defending champion. Likewise, Manitou Springs senior and regional champ Kevin Wood is a



HUNTER McRAE, THE GAZETTE FILE

Liberty's Rachel Godby set a personal record of 10 feet, 6 inches in the pole vault recently. Godby is a contender in the event at the Class 4A state track and field championships in Denver.

threat in the 110 and 300 hurdles.

Class 2A

Limon is the defending state team champion for both the boys and girls.

But is it a sure thing they can repeat?

"It's hard to say because until you go out there you don't know who's going to nickel and dime them," Fountain Valley coach Bruce Ingersoll said. "If lightning strikes, maybe we can catch them or battle for second."

The Limon girls cruised to a win at regionals behind wins by Justine Sandersfeld in the 400 and 800. Whitney Liggett is a title contender in the high jump and 300 hurdles.

Peyton, on the other hand, defeated the Limon boys to win the regional meet by 51 points. Junior Travis Stanford placed second in the 800 last year. Senior Andy Richardson won the 200 and 400 at regionals in his first year of track.

The Limon boys were missing one of their top track athletes in senior Tyson Liggett, who skipped the regional meet to play baseball.

That was critical since he picked up the save to send the Badgers to the state semifinals today at 3 p.m. He'll compete in the 100 dash and 800 relay preliminaries beforehand.

If the Limon advances to the state baseball championship at 3 p.m. Saturday, he will be unavailable.

"That's the way it is in a lot of small schools," Limon track and field coach Warren Mitchell said. "I hope they win it."

Regional discus champion Matt Hiltner of Limon should contend.

Fountain Valley's sister duo of Emily and Maggie Hanna could sweep the hurdling events. Emily, a freshman, set a school and regional meet record last week in the 100 hurdles (14.97).

Senior Maggie is the defending state champion in the 300 hurdles. She is undefeated in the event this season and competed well against big-school teams at Air Academy's Glen Peterson Invitational.