

IOWA BOYS STATE TRACK

Clinton Co. doubles up

Robinson repeats as 400 champ

BY JON GREMMELS
Herald Sports Editor

DES MOINES — As Deshond Robinson rounded the first turn of the 400-meter dash on the Drake Stadium track, Jase Grant of Dubuque Senior went whizzing past the Clinton High senior, and Robinson's heart sunk a bit.

Grant had the state's fastest time in the 400 most of the season and edged Robinson last week at the district meet. And, as Robinson rounded the halfway point, it appeared his chances of repeating as champion were a lot further away than the physical distance.

"I didn't think I'd stand a chance against him because he was quicker than me out of the box, but around that corner, I guess, it was my turn to shine," Robinson said.

Somehow, Robinson found another gear and passed everyone in front him to become Clinton's first back-to-back state champion in a sprint race since Carl Nelson did it in both the 100-yard and 220-yard dashes in 1932 and 1933.



Clinton's Deshond Robinson (center) charges between Carter Lilly (left) of Sioux City East and Jase Grant of Dubuque Senior on his way to a come-from-behind victory in the Class 4A 400-meter dash. A strong finish allowed Robinson to repeat as champion in the event with a 48.66-second clocking. To see more photos from the Iowa track and field state meet, see the photo gallery at Clintonherald.smugmug.com.

"Oh, yeah, I felt the pressure," he said. "I was really nervous before the race. Then, I guess I had it in me to finish, and I kind of made it." Robinson's time (48.66) was five-hundredths of a second better than his winning time of a year ago and .13 ahead of Grant, the runner-up.

"I was kind of feeling dead over there, but then I figured, I had to go another 150 meters, and I was like, 'That's nothing, really,' " said Robinson, who only minutes before had qualified for Saturday's finals in the 200-meter dash. "I just gave it all I've got to finish it out." Rejuvenated, he found some extra speed as he hit the final turn and started passing the competition.

"Coming around that corner, I kind of felt more confident that I could beat him, and I guess it worked," Robinson said. "I showed him what I've got." Running in Lane 5 in the third heat of the timed final, Robinson surged and caught and passed Carter Lilly of Sioux City East to his right and Grant to his left.

"I guess you could say I'm the type of guy that likes to chase people down, which makes me go a lot quicker and makes me push myself even more," Robinson said. "Without that, I don't think I could have made that happen.

"I wanted to do as I did last year, and I had to defend my title. It's my race -- what can I say?"