Hobart wraps up crown after two days of delays

May 23, 2010 BY JOHN O'MALLEY, POST-TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

CROWN POINT -- The year was 1958.

Hobart vault coach Jim Johnston, Sr., was competing in the pole vault at Purdue the last time the school won a boys sectional track title.

On Saturday, Brickies junior vaulter Ryan McGuire won a sectional title with a personal-best effort of 14 feet, 6 inches.

McGuire's performance helped Hobart officially capture its first sectional title in 52 years Saturday.

After two days of postponements, the pole vault competition was finally contested at the Crown Point Sectional.

Hobart ended up with 121.50 points, while Merrillville was second with 97.50.

"We waited 52 years, so what's two more days?" Hobart coach Nick Byrd said. "This means a lot to our school and our community. All the kids competed and did their jobs. This trophy is for them. They all earned it."

"It feels great," McGuire said. "The coaches were joking at school and telling me: 'Get (at least) three points. Everyone pulled their part. I had to do mine. It's been 52 years. It's been so long. I'm happy we got it. We have a really great team."

McGuire, the No. 2 seed, edged Merrillville's top-seeded Byron Ferrell, who went 14 feet and placed second.

And Merrillville's Monte Brown, the No. 3 seed?

He was one minute late for the team bus and scratched by Pirates head coach Jim Johnston from competition.

"It burns right here," said Johnston, rubbing his stomach. "It makes me sick, but he knows what the rules are. I can't make an exception for him. I never did it for anyone else."

A heart-broken Brown, who won the Duneland Conference title last week, was so excited about competing Saturday, he couldn't sleep.

"I was up at 7 a.m.," he said. "I couldn't wait to jump. It hurts. You can't even fathom it. I cried all morning. There's nothing you can do. You can't bend the rules. You've got to have class. Coach 'J' can't bend the rules for me when he doesn't bend them for anyone else. He's teaching us to be men. This is a big life-lesson."