

■ CRICKET: ISSA/GRACE SHIELD

Jermaine Lannaman

Gleaner Writer

ST CATHERINE defeated Norman Manley by nine wickets at St John's Road on Thursday, to join defending champions Eltham High at the top of Section One, thus giving themselves a good chance of making it to the final of the urban area ISSA/Grace Shield Premier League competition.

With one round of matches to go, St Catherine are now on five points, the same as Eltham, who

St Catherine, Wolmer's join race for final

played out a no-result draw with Meadowbrook.

At St John's Road: Overnight and early morning rain forced the game to start at 4:30 p.m., but not even that could have saved the visitors as, after resuming at 18-3, they were bowled out for 104 in their second innings.

Set a victory target of 12, the home team then cruised to victory

for the loss of a wicket. Norman Manley made 102 in their first innings on day one, to which St Catherine replied with 193-9 declared.

At Meadowbrook: The home team, after resuming at 62-2, were struggling at 184-7 when the rains came half hour before lunch. No play was possible thereafter.

Norman Manley now have three

points heading into the final round, while Meadowbrook have two. Both teams must win outright if they are to qualify for the final.

Elsewhere, last year's beaten finalist Innswood are in a pole position to take Section Two, after claiming first innings points in their rain-aborted game against Tarrant at Tarrant.

Tarrant had resumed at 37 for

five in their second innings, but a wet pitch and outfield meant that both teams had to abandon the contest. In their first innings, they had made 96. Innswood scored 302-7 declared.

Innswood lead the section on eight points, three more than Wolmer's.

At Excelsior: Wolmer's, who were 49-4, were forced to stay in

the pavilion due to the weather. Excelsior, in their first innings, made 386-6 declared.

Excelsior, on two points and Tarrant on zero points, are both out of the race for a spot in the final.

The semi-final round continues next Thursday and Friday with St Catherine hosting Meadowbrook, Eltham entertaining Norman Manley, Innswood at home to Wolmer's and Tarrant travelling to Excelsior.

■ ATHLETICS

Juniors hunt spots on Carifta team

Anthony Foster

Gleaner Writer

THE TWO-DAY Jamaica Amateur Athletic Association (JAAA) Carifta Trials runs off at the National Stadium today.

The trials start at 11 a.m. both days.

Athletes must compete at the trials in order to be considered for selection to represent Jamaica at the Carifta Games, which will be held in the Cayman April 2-5.

More than 700 of the island's top junior athletes will be battling for places on Jamaica's team, which is expected to be reduced to 70 members. They will be challenging for two spots each per event in both the Under-17 and Under-20 categories.

HOT 100M

The girls' 100m hurdles Under-20 is expected to be hotly contested, with America-based Samantha Scarlett, Samantha Elliott of Immaculate, Keenan Davis of Edwin Allen and Tanique Sobah of St Jago hunting the available spots.

In the Under-20 girls 100m, the Holmwood pair of Yanique Ellington and Shericka Moulton, along with Vere's Deandrea Whitehorn and Vere Technical's Celia Walters, appear the major contenders.

In the 400m, also at the Under-20 level, Holmwood's Samantha Woodburne, Edwin Allen's Shashawna Ffrench and Wolmer's Danielle Dowie are the main contenders.

Dowie is also expected to

challenge Edwin Allen's Ristananna Tracey for a top spot in the one-lap hurdles.

Manchester High's Chance Porter, Kimberly Williamson of Edwin Allen, Peta-Gaye Reid and Rochelle Farquharson will headline the field events.

On the boys' side, Jazeel Murphy of Bridgeport is the top man in the 100m and 200m. He is the defending champion in both events at Carifta Games.

KC's Donahue Williams, Old Harbour High's Kemar Bailey-Cole and Munro College's Adams Cummings should add some fire to the boys' event.

In the sprints and field events, Julian Forte of Wolmer's and Kinston College's Johanatha Reid rank among the main contenders.



Murphy



AP PHOTOS

In this February 2009 picture provided by Carole Melville, Newton Marshall leads his dogs on the Takhini River after leaving Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, for the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race. The creators of the Jamaica Dogsled Team have sent Marshall to the pinnacle of world-class competitions, the 1,100-mile Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

Inset, top left: Marshall runs with his dog Marbles on the beach at Chukka Cove in St Ann.

Jamaica's Marshall challenges new frontier on Yukon Quest

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP):

THE 38th running of the world's most famous sled dog race kicks off today amid depleted finances that have slashed the cash purse even as the cost of competitive mushing continues to climb.

Yet the mystique of the 1,100-mile (1,770-kilometre) Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race keeps drawing mushers from outside Alaska, including a first this year – a rookie from Jamaica, Newton Marshall, a native of St Ann who trains with dogs pulling him on an oversized tricycle along the beach at Chukka Cove.

Also running are five past winners,

including defending champion Lance Mackey, a throat cancer survivor from Fairbanks who is going for a fourth consecutive win.

Another strong contender is Canadian Hans Gatt, who in February became a four-time winner of the 1,000-mile (1,600-kilometre) Yukon Quest race, which Mackey also has won four times.

CEREMONIAL START

The Iditarod begins with a ceremonial start in Anchorage, Alaska. The actual competition gets under way tomorrow in Willow, 50 miles (80 kilometres) to the north. From there, mushers leave festivities behind for a trail that

crosses two mountain ranges, scores of Alaska native villages, then part of the frozen Bering Sea shore before it reaches the finish line in the old gold rush town of Nome on Alaska's western coast. It's a trail where temperatures can plunge to 50 below zero (minus 10 C) and fierce winds can wipe out visibility.

The total purse this year is \$590,000 – down from a high of \$925,000 in 2008 – with \$50,000 of this year's prize money donated by four-time champion Jeff King, who also is in the running. Even the prize for the winner will be nearly \$20,000 smaller than the \$69,000 of past years. The winner still also receives a new truck.