



## The Best Thing I Saw at State: Rain Delays & Broken Records

***Brother Martin's Easton Royal broke a 46-year-old state record after storms nearly derailed State Track Meet.***

By Ethan W. Anderson

The *Best Thing I Saw at State* is a new column that brings to life the moments that make high school sports so meaningful. Through the stories, emotions, and details that often go unseen at the state championships, it captures what the box score can't.



**BATON ROUGE** — At times on both Friday and Saturday, the Bernie Moore Track Complex looked more like a retention pond than the site of the 2026 LHSAA State Outdoor Track and Field Championships.

Heavy rain soaked Baton Rouge on multiple occasions over the weekend, leaving standing water across parts of the track and debris scattered throughout the facility. Mulch floated onto the competition surface. The skies stayed gray. Lightning lingered nearby. And for a moment, the focus was no longer on medals, records, or championships.

*Images taken by GeauxPreps & Michael Johnson*



It was simply about finding a way to compete.

The LHSAA Outdoor State Meet is one of the most demanding championships conducted all year. Over three days, the event hosts 14 meets across seven divisions, boys and girls combined, with hundreds of races, relays, and field events packed into a tight schedule at LSU's Bernie Moore Stadium. There are no extra weekends available. No backup facility capable of hosting an event of this size. The meet has to happen within the window available.

And then Louisiana weather enters the equation.

As rain continued to impact the schedule Friday and Saturday, championship staff had to adjust in real time. Field events that could be moved indoors were relocated to LSU's state-of-the-art indoor facility. Running events were pushed back until the evening while officials monitored lightning around the area. Distance races and select field events were combined by division in an effort to save time and keep the championships moving.

What spectators saw were delays. What many probably did not see were the people behind the scenes fighting to save the meet.

LHSAA staff members, LSU personnel, volunteers, officials, and workers spent hours cleaning the facility and reorganizing schedules. At one point Friday, parts of the track had nearly six inches of water covering them. Once the rain slowed, crews moved into action, sweeping mulch, dirt, and debris from the surface so competition could resume safely.

Everyone had a job. Everyone adjusted. Everyone worked together.





LHSAA Assistant Executive Director Adam MacDowell, who serves as State Meet Director, led the effort throughout the weekend as conditions continuously changed. Decisions were made collectively between LHSAA staff and LSU personnel to ensure student-athletes could still experience a state championship despite the circumstances.

And in the middle of all that chaos came one of the greatest performances Louisiana high school track and field has ever seen.

Brother Martin junior Easton Royal entered Saturday as one of the most anticipated athletes at the meet. Many fans know Royal for what he does on the football field as a Division I receiver committed to the University of Texas, but his speed on the track somehow feels even more impressive when there is nothing in front of him except open track.

Leading into the Class 5A 100-meter final, there was already buzz around the stadium about the possibility of history. Royal entered with a regional time of 10.47, but he had consistently flirted with the state record all season with times of 10.26, 10.24, 10.20, and 10.18.

The pursuit was never accidental. Royal later said breaking the record had been a goal from the beginning of the season. After finishing second in the event at state a year ago, he approached this season with what he repeatedly described as a “redemption” mindset.

“This year I really focused more on track, getting speed training and block-work training,” Royal said. “Last year I came out here, I had it to the end of the race and I lost. And it left a bad taste in my mouth, so I had hunger.”

Then came the final.

Royal didn’t explode out of the blocks like you might think, and for a split second, it looked like the 46-year-old record might survive another year.

It didn’t.

Almost immediately, Royal separated himself from the field, gliding down the straightaway as the crowd inside Bernie Moore Stadium rose to its feet. When he crossed the line, all eyes turned to the scoreboard. After a few quiet seconds, it flashed: 10.17.

A collective reaction swept through the stadium. The record was gone.

Royal had broken the Louisiana state composite record of 10.20 set in 1980 by Fair Park legend Rod Richardson, known across the state simply as “Rocket” Richardson. For nearly half a century, Richardson’s mark stood untouched through generations of Louisiana sprinters.

“Coming out here, I knew the record was mine,” Royal said afterward. “This year has been all about redemption, so I had it on my mind today.”

Yet even after becoming the fastest high school sprinter in Louisiana history, Royal still believed there was more in the tank.



“It’s expected,” Royal said. “It obviously means a lot, but I wanted to run 10.00 or closer to the 9 range. But God blessed me to be able to run a 10.17, which I’m grateful for.”

The performance became even more impressive considering the conditions. The track had spent much of the previous day underwater. Even Richardson himself acknowledged the difficulty of what Royal accomplished.

“To run that time in those conditions, a wet track, that’s tough,” Richardson said. “I wish nothing but the best for him.”

Royal was not finished.

Later in the meet, he captured another gold medal in the 200 meters with a time of 20.84 before delivering perhaps the most electric moment of the weekend in the 4x100 relay. Brother Martin entered the final exchange trailing the field before Royal received the baton on the anchor leg.

The stadium immediately came alive.

Within seconds, Royal erased the gap, flying past team after team down the final stretch to bring the Crusaders from behind to another state title. It was the kind of performance that forces an entire stadium onto its feet before the race is even over.

Royal almost seemed to expect that moment too.

“Usually, throughout the race, I can tell how it’s gonna go,” Royal said. “So before I even got the baton, I said to myself, ‘I know how this race is about to go.’”

It would have been easy for the best thing I saw at state to simply be Easton Royal breaking one of Louisiana’s longest-standing records. Watching someone run 10.17 seconds in person is something I will probably never forget.

But the more I thought about it, the more I kept going back to the people holding brooms in the rain.

Before records could be broken, before medals could be handed out, and before crowds could celebrate moments like Royal’s historic sprint, there were people fighting the weather to make sure the state meet survived at all.

They swept water off the track. They reorganized schedules. They moved events indoors. They adapted constantly so student-athletes across Louisiana could still have their moment on the biggest stage.

Easton Royal may have been the fastest person at the state meet.

But the heart of the weekend belonged to everyone who refused to let the storm win.

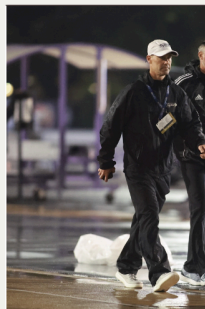
**Editor’s Note:** Historical information and quotes from Rod Richardson and Easton Royal were sourced from reporting by Jerry Byrd of [MileSplit Louisiana](#) and Jerit Roser of [Louisiana vs. All Y’all](#).



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**CHAMPIONSHIP  
STAFF**



**EASTON ROYAL**  
BROTHER MARTIN HIGH SCHOOL

**Author's Note:** *In my role as the Director of Communications, I have the unique privilege of attending nearly all sanctioned LHSAA State Championship events. Although the schedule is demanding, I have the privilege of seeing student-athletes from all walks of life, united by two things: their participation in Louisiana high school sports and their pursuit of a state championship. In my first year in this role, I've gained a deeper appreciation for high school athletics and for all the dedication that goes into making each season and event possible. Although my current role involves less writing than my previous positions, it has given me the opportunity to return to something I've always loved. While much of my work now focuses on press releases and public statements, I also have the chance to reconnect with my passion for feature writing, this time highlighting what I consider the purest form of sport: high school athletics. The goal is to highlight the best thing I saw at each state championship and share the unknown stories behind these events, capturing memorable moments for student-athletes, coaches, administrators, officials, and fans.*