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East finishes 2nd in UEC Girls Indoor Track Meet

ST. CHARLES – If the Upstate Eight Conference Girls Indoor Track Meet is a stepping stone for the outdoor season, both St. Charles North and East saw promising signs of team unity.

For instance, there was East senior Jess Nier, who sprinted toward a third-place finish in the 55-meter hurdles in 9.57 seconds, while her freshman protégé, Annie Martines, followed behind, finishing fifth in 9.8 seconds.

"We both wanted to place," Nier said, "so it's really awesome that we did."

On North's side, the 4x160-meter relay team of seniors Jenna Loynachan, Coral Cass, Vanessa Grano and sophomore Jessica Krantz came in second place in 1:28.45, edging out Neuqua Valley.

"They did a really nice job. They worked a ton on their hand-off," North coach Sarah Manwaring said.

The first steps of cohesion might not have put either school on top of the meet, with Waubonsie Valley holding the lead, East finished second with 99 points thanks to some strong individual performances, like Mallory Abel, who took first in the 3,200-meter run in 11:25.29. Her teammate, Grace Gordon came in at third in 12:09.44.

East coach Denise Hefferin said the meet was, "a points game," which explained why the Saints ended up not running the 4x800 relay, despite being seeded first.

"We kind of re-arranged our lineup a little bit to get points elsewhere," Hefferin said.

The move paid off in that East avoided one of the more controversial races of the meet.

Girls from Waubonise Valley, Neuqua Valley and Bartlett ran an extra lap early in the race, causing confusion for one of North's runners, who also ran extra. All four teams were disqualified from the race.

Manwaring said she would not give the DQ much thought, instead focusing on fostering North's continued development and improvements.

"We're learning how to compete, we're putting together a relay, we're coming together and we're working hard," she said.

Hefferin also pointed out areas for East to improve in, but also spoke to an advantage they had in the meet.

"We've had a lot of experience indoors," Hefferin said, "because we have so many meets at our place."

That much was evident in the number of Saints scattered on the leader boards. Maya Rittmanic placed second in the high jump (5-4) and third in the long jump (16-10). Rachel Rawson also placed second in the 400-meter dash in 1:02.84.

"It is a jumping point into the outdoor season," she said. That means that the Saints will be working toward the outdoor conference meet.

"It won't be that long before we'll see all these people again," Hefferin said.

And next time, she says, they hope to finish in first.

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