



Saints come on strong

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The final leg of the 1,600-meter relay was a coronation for Waubonsie Valley in general and a victory lap for Shakeia Pinnick in particular.

The Warriors' superstar, who earlier captured three individual events at the Upstate Eight Conference girls track and field championship, did not have a pursuer within 75 meters when she concluded the final act of her four-year historic league run.

But Waubonsie Valley is far from a one-person show, and the squad displayed depth, balance and excellence throughout all 18 events to win its second conference title in the last three years. Waubonsie Valley won six individual titles and all three sprint relays to amass 148 points Thursday night in Naperville.

St. Charles East, with Lizzy Hynes offering a brilliant testimony of her own in her showdown with Lake Park standout Lindsay Flanagan in the 3,200-meter run, was a distant second with 94 points.

Bartlett edged St. Charles North for fifth place.

The most anticipated event of the night came at 3,200 meters, and Hynes continued her quest. St. Charles East's Boston College-bound four-year star made a preseason vow to showcase her skills at two miles, and she has not disappointed.

Pitted against nationally-ranked Flanagan, Hynes shadowed the University of Washington recruit for the first four laps. Hynes took command on the fifth lap and never trailed in posting the lowest time in the state this year with her convincing 10:32.2.

Flanagan, the reigning Class AA state runner-up, was second in an equally brilliant 10.41.72. The third-place runner, St. Charles East freshman Mallory Abel, was 55 seconds behind Flanagan.

"I knew what to expect," Hynes said. "Everything has just been clicking for me, mentally and physically. The competition is there, and the weather has been on my side. It's nice to have someone to run with."

Buoyed by Hynes' lone race, the Saints took their cue from the senior leader and responded accordingly. Junior sprinter Danielle Kuzniewski was the Saints' guiding light, placing second in the 100 and 200 meters. Kuzniewski also anchored the Saints' two sprint relays to runner-up places.

Allie Devor and Maya Rittmanic were equally consistent in the field for St. Charles East. Devor won the shot put and took second in the discus; Rittmanic was third in both the long and high jumps.

"I'm really happy with how I did," said Kuzniewski, who teamed with Jess Nier, Rittmanic, Heather Mende and Kelsey Gentry in the Saints' sprint relays. "We're really hoping to make state-qualifying time."

"Our team as a whole is really performing well," said Nier, who was third in the 300 hurdles.

"(St. Charles East is) going to score some points at the state meet, especially with (Hynes)," Braun said. "She is an amazing athlete, an elite athlete."

Jenna Loynachan also went out in style for St. Charles North. The senior won the open 400 meters after a lightening-fast start.

"People were telling me that I had to go out fast," said Loynachan. "This was my last chance to experiment in my 400

tactics before the sectional."

Coral Cass and freshman Jessica Scheets were mainstays for the North Stars, who also received commendable finishes from pole-vault stalwarts Meredith Beird and Danielle Goebbert.

BNC meet: The Burlington Central girls track team couldn't have asked for a better start to the Big Northern Conference meet Thursday. The Rockets won the first two events, the 4x800-meter and 4x100 relays, and dominated the field en route to capturing the team title.

"It really sets the tone when your team gets off to an awesome start," Central's Maggie Gannon said. "It was vital as far as affecting the other girls. It just lit a fire under everyone."

Central finished with 130 points, well ahead of Marengo (69). Richmond-Burton (66.5), Byron (59) and Winnebago (50) rounded out the top five. Hampshire was ninth with 33 points.

The Rockets led at every exchange of the 4x800 relay as Katie Puccio, Hannah Williams, Markelle Turk and Gannon finished in 9:53.36, nearly 6 seconds ahead of Winnebago. In the 4x100 relay, Alexa Tovsen barely trailed Marengo's Lauren Hunt on the final handoff before beating Hunt to the finish line in 51.28 seconds. Jordan Maisto, Cailie Thommes and Vanessa Perez joined Tovsen on the relay team.

"We talked about it back in January and made it one of seasonal goals," Central coach Aaron Wichman said of the conference title. "The girls bought into working hard. A lot of our workouts are pretty tough."

Gannon also continued her dominance in the 800 and 1,600 runs. The junior broke her own conference record she set last year in both events. Gannon took control in the 800 with about 200 meters to go to finish in 2:17.84, beating her mark of 2:21.42 from last year. She won the 1,600 with a run of 5:17.90, more than 7 seconds better than her time of 5:35.99 last year.

Gannon also anchored the 4x400 relay team of Perez, Puccio and Meghann Thommes that won the final event in 4:12.18.

"To be a four-time conference winner in a varsity meet is quite an accomplishment," Wichman said. "Even more impressive was the way that she did it. The times that she ran in the events she ran. You just don't see that a lot."

- Brian Schaumburg