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# East's Hynes coming home a champion

## Saints senior finishes first in state in 3,200 meters

CHARLESTON – Pledging to "win or die trying" still leaves the possibility of losing.

St. Charles East senior Lizzy Hynes made that vow on Saturday afternoon with one state championship in hand, and she hardly keeled over after taking third in a later final. Seemed fair.

"Part of you is really content that you finally achieved it, but the other part wants more," Hynes said. "I would have liked to win more during my career, but I'm still really happy that I achieved that one goal that had been so elusive every year."

Hynes secured her first career state title in her final trip to the IHSA Girls State Track Meet in Charleston, bolting past Lake Park senior Lindsay Flanagan in the final stages of the 3,200 meters in Class 3A.

The Boston College recruit seized the lead midway through the 1,600 a few hours later before eventual champion Rebecca Tracy of Barrington and McKinzie Schulz of Benet surged ahead. Both made their moves at about the same spot on the backstretch where Hynes had overtaken Flanagan.

Hynes nearly saw it coming.

"I knew that I was just going to go for it here and see if I had a kick at the end," she said. "Obviously, the other girls did, but I'm still pretty happy."

Hynes' title highlighted a prolonged final day for Chronicle-area athletes in the first weekend of three-class state track. Competing in Class 2A, senior Lindsay Gierke of Kaneland delivered the next-best performance, medaling in the 100 hurdles (second), 300 hurdles (third) and 100 dash (fourth).

Gierke figured fathoming a three-event plate downstate would have frightened her four years ago. These days, it serves as a springboard into a college career at Northern Iowa.

"I've been here since freshman year, so it was kind of scary then," Gierke said. "Now I'm kind of used to it and don't get too nervous."

Fellow triple-qualifier Alissa Dappas of Geneva placed eighth in the 300 hurdles and ninth in the 100 hurdles before helping the Vikings' 4x400 relay team to a fourth-place run.

The quartet of Erica Miller, Sammi Hill, Taylor Wickware and Dappas improved on their preliminary time of 3:54.61 by .03. That was enough for one member to make a pledge of her own, not unlike Hynes.

"You'll definitely see us again," said Dappas, a junior. "We'll be back. I'm excited for next year."

Pole vaulter Allie Pace (second) and Geneva's 4x800 relay of Megan Heuer, Rachel Hammond, Kelly Whitley and Miller could return intact too, as the group contains no seniors. On Saturday, the relay's sixth-place finish – plus Sarah Heuer's 16th-place two-mile run – helped the Vikings tie Whitney Young for 10th in the team standings, 32 points behind champion Belleville West.

Kaneland was ninth in 2A, 23 points back of first-place Rock Island. Jordan Pinkston added a fifth-place showing in the pole vault while the Knights' 4x800 relay took ninth.

Illnesses and injuries transformed Batavia from a third-place AA team last year to a one-athlete show in 2009. Illinois College-bound Melissa Norville dedicated her performance to hobbled classmate Natalie Tarter, a Wisconsin signee who watched from the stands.

After latching on as the final qualifier in the triple jump preliminaries, Norville recovered like she planned, taking third. She viewed her sixth-place run in the 300 hurdles from a variety of angles, including the perspective of the event's defending champion.

Waubonsie Valley senior Shakeia Pinnick, an anticipated rival until Tarter pulled her hamstring two weeks ago, unseated Tarter despite chopping a pair of hurdles.

"That wouldn't have happened with Natalie," Norville said. "Natalie would have won. I'm not going to lie."

East junior Maya Rittmanic, who Norville edged by a quarter-inch to sneak into the triple jump finals, took eighth in the high jump. Freshman teammate Mallory Abel ran the 3,200 in 11:49.69, a respectable understudy time compared to Hynes' 10:35.02.

Flanagan finished in 10:42.14, watching Hynes outfox her with a backstretch sprint with about 300 meters to go.

"[Flanagan] kind of has her one thing," Hynes said. "She knows how to hammer it from the start, but it's kind of a little surprising when someone outkicks you at the end. I've had that happen to me before."

In the end, Hynes' past might have worked against her, too.

"She looked so good in the two-mile," Schulz said. "That psyched me up just to run."

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