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Vikings close gap with West Aurora

AURORA – Regional bragging rights kicked in for West Aurora shortly after 4x400-meter relay anchor George Handley crossed the finish line in Friday's final event.

The individual rivalries waged throughout the 91st boys Kane County Meet offered a more than worthy lead-up to the Blackhawks' second-straight title.

Some winners credited "sick kicks" while others drew inspiration from words permanently inked on their arms. They're the same things that get athletes by on other days, only this time the challenge was a bit tougher and the field a bit deeper.

"It's nice to have all the great competition in one place," Kaneland senior Logan Markuson said. "Sometimes the Tuesday meets, it seems like there's not as many. When you get in a big meet like this, coaches say points count and rankings don't mean much because it all comes down to what you do in the race."

Ditto for the jumping area and throwing pits, too.

Geneva junior thrower Frank Boenzi helped the second-place Vikings (78 points) edge Batavia (77.5) and close the gap on West (101.5) with titles in the discus and shot put, topping Blackhawks senior Kevin Costin both times.

The duo knows one another well, competing the past several years with Costin owning the recent edge. He beat Boenzi at the 2008 Geneva and county meets, then won again this year at Geneva. Encouraged this time after looking at the tattoo on his right arm that cites Biblical verse Phillipians 4:13 and drawing strength through God, Boenzi let fly.

His 57-1 heave in the shot put set a new school record, while his 159-6 throw in the discus wasn't too shabby, either.

"You always want to peak at your last meet," Boenzi said. "I'm on my way to peaking for the season. I was not going to let him beat me."

The first athlete to leave the meet, fittingly, hailed from outside Kane County. Marmion senior Andrew Larsen, a Montini transfer, burst past Geneva senior Andrew Nelson with about 300 meters remaining in the 3,200 to win by nearly eight seconds at 9:08.92.

He screamed in celebration, embraced his teammates and Nelson, but then had other things to do.

"Normally I've got to get in a nice little cool down, get the good thing going, but I figure I've got to get it in," he said. "I've got to go to prom."

Nearby Rosary hosted its annual event Friday, and Larsen likely was dancing at the hour they ran the mile. Nelson, whose second place 9:16.59 in the 3,200 established another school record, pulled away from Dundee-Crown's Anthony Manfrin to win in 4:19.15.

There were other such turnarounds. Markuson avenged a loss to West sophomore Marcus Waller in the 110-meter hurdles when he won by five-hundredths of a second in the 300.

Waller closed fast, but Markuson discovered just enough oomph down the stretch.

"You've always got to find a little more," he said, "even though it seems like it's already all out there."

Marmion (74 points) placed fourth while Kaneland (62) and St. Charles North (48) followed. Crosstown rival St. Charles East took 12th with six points.

Nick Sinon added a high jump title for the Knights while North's Max Clink (800 meters) was his school's lone champion.

Batavia boasted two event winners: the 4x100 relay team of Andy Thomas, Bai Kabba Emund Kabba and Scott Poulos as well as Bai Kabba in the 200.

Kabba edged West senior Josh Zinzer with a time of 22.10, turning the tables on the Blackhawk who beat him earlier in the 100.

"He's just a [heck] of a lot faster out of the blocks, and the 100 is all about the block start," Kabba said. "He's a quick dude,

quick and fast."

Everyone seems to be at the Kane County Meet.

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