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Top efforts at Top Times

By Jeff Newton Daily Herald Correspondent
 Posted Sunday, March 28, 2004

CHAMPAIGN - Practice? Who needs practice?

OK, so Geneva senior and defending Class AA pole vault state champion Sarah Landau probably does need the practice. But it's hard for her to get it.

"We don't have an indoor pit to practice on so I have to get myself ready other ways," Landau said. "When it gets to meets, I have confidence in my ability to vault and clear big heights."

On Saturday at the 15th annual Illinois Prep Top Times invite, Landau got her chance at "big heights" and showed she was up to the task.

Though she finished second on number of misses, her effort of 11 feet, 9 inches tied Mary-Pat Choules of Mahomet Seymour and set a Top Times record.

Rolling Meadows junior Amy Dahlin was third with a personal best of 11-3.

"I vaulted only a few times indoors and walked away with my indoor PR," Landau said. "I am happy with that and I am definitely ready to go outdoors."

Palatine proved it was more than ready for the outdoor season with a scintillating start to the meet.

Thanks to a fabulous anchor leg by Amy Laskowske, the Pirates reeled in Neuqua Valley for a win in the 3,200-meter relay. The 9:30.05 was more than 11 seconds faster than the top-seeded Pirates' seedtime.

"We knew they were so awesome and they really were," said Neuqua anchor runner Marisa Mele. "She (Amy) had just as much left in the tank as I did and she just fought real hard to the end."

Suzy Turner, Carly Bates, and Stephanie Abram joined Laskowske on the winning relay for Palatine. Andrea Kruszka, Emily Hartley, and Amanda Mirochna joined Mele for a season-best effort by the Wildcats.

"I just put everything I had into it," Laskowske said. "We wanted our indoor school record so badly and it's nice to get it."

Laskowske wound up her day in a fast 1,600-meter field. Her third-place finish (5:07.67) was just behind two of the state's best distance runners in Hailee Elmore of Springfield and Caitlin Chrisman of Carbondale. Turner ran right behind Laskowske, medaling in fourth at 5:12.71.

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Chrisman ran away from the field in the 3,200, winning in an impressive 10:49.92. Streamwood freshman Nancy Nieto held off a hard charge from Lindsey Kotovsky of Lincoln-Way East for a second-place finish in a personal best 11:04.99.

Grant believed it could compete with the state's best, and Saturday the Bulldogs proved it.

Junior Pam Staton had her chance first, in the 800 run. She stayed with the top group, led by eventual winner Molly Sullivan of York. Staton's 2:20.56 was third overall and a personal best.

She later joined Kaela Munster, Amy LeJeune and Kirstin Nozime for a fourth place overall finish. The Bulldogs' time of 4:08.38 was good enough to win their heat.

"We are running times now that we ran outdoors last year," Staton said. "I think we proved to ourselves that we are a good team and that we can compete with the other great runners and teams."

Conant sophomore Lauren Martin jumped out of the blue to win the triple jump. Her winning hop, skip, and jump of 36-10⁰⁰/₁₀₀ was more than a foot better than her previous season indoor best mark of 35-9.

Hinsdale South senior Jackie Walton, the top-seed, was right behind Martin (36-7⁰⁰/₁₀₀) as was Neuqua Valley sophomore Jackie Coleman (36-2⁰⁰/₁₀₀).

Coleman also medaled in the long jump (16-8⁰⁰/₁₀₀) finishing fifth behind Naperville Central senior Lauren McNichols (17-2⁰⁰/₁₀₀).

Glenbard West senior Yovonne Williamson had just enough on her shot put throw to edge out top-seed Dechet Miller of Glenbard East. Williamson's best throw was just a quarter inch better than Miller's.

Boys: Led by a dominant leadoff leg from Prince Riley, Neuqua Valley ran away from the rest of the field in the 1,600-meter relay, winning in 3:25.21. Pat Warren and Matt Dakin joined Stanek and Riley for the winning relay.

The Wildcats needed everything they had to hold off a hard charge from Carmel. The Corsairs destroyed their previous indoor school record with a third-place time of 3:27.68. James Looby, Jim Levasseur, Kevin Devitt, and Rich Fugiel made up the Corsair quartet.

Fugiel medaled earlier in the afternoon with a fourth place finish in the open 400-meter run. His 50.97 effort edged Riley, but was just short of champion Justin Harrison of Wheaton South.

The morning session of the 15th annual invite started with a family flair. Naperville North twin brothers Dan and Joe Curran ran 1-2, respectively, in the 3,200.

Palatine sophomore Glenn Morris led the second pack of runners finishing in a season best 9:29.69. Schaumburg senior Brian Lesiewicz also had a season best effort at 9:32.38.

The two then watched Prospect run to an indoor best in the 3,200 relay. The Knights' team of Jay Renaud, Kyle Peterson, Mike Murray and John Jenkins finished third in 8:09.8.

Jacobs senior Pat Whalen also saw his shot at a title slip away at the end. In his final

throw in the shot put competition, Whalen launched what appeared to be a throw long enough to win. But the toss was ruled a scratch giving the win to Jovan Jovanovic of Maine East (56-10"). Benet's Mike Schubert (54-8) and Carmel's James Larson (51-11") both medaled, finishing third and fifth, respectively.

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