

Glenbard West sophomore Chloe Arduino is hoping for a healthy girls track season. She's already off to another successful one.

At the indoor season opener for the frosh-soph team Saturday, Feb. 13 in Glen Ellyn, Arduino was part of three event victories that helped the Hilltoppers score 61 points and finish second to Downers Grove North (70 points) and ahead of Glenbard East (36).

Arduino won the 50-meter dash (7.3 seconds manual time), the 200 (29.1) and anchored the winning 4-lap relay with sophomore Teiana Ware, freshman Katie Cavanagh and sophomore Micah Love (1:34.6).

"I wasn't really expecting to do that well, but I think overall it was a pretty good meet," Arduino said.

"I know my first season went pretty well, but I wasn't really expecting a lot because it was the first couple of weeks of workouts and I haven't been doing it for a long time. I thought I'd do OK."

Other frosh-soph event winners for the Hilltoppers were sophomores MaryBeth Feeley (300 in 46.6) and Emma Hanson (50 hurdles in 9.3), Mary Kate Shaver (1,600 in 5:56.4) and Marika Tammaru (800 in 2:37.0), freshman Katie Hohe (3,200 in 11:36.2), the 3,200 relay of freshman Chloe Connolly, Tammaru and freshmen Grace Oh and Abby Hoffman (10:35.7) and the 1,600 relay of Feeley, sophomore Kailey Schmidt, Hohe and freshman Charlotte Kreissler (4:35.4)

Arduino had a strong indoor freshman track season, often anchoring the frosh-soph 800 relay. Her 7.96 fully-automatic time in the 55 was the third fastest for the entire team.

Then she hurt her patella during a club volleyball tournament and missed most of the outdoor season with an inflamed knee. Her only two meets were May 4 and the outdoor Silver Meet May 9, where she led off the frosh-soph 400 and 800 relays.

"The knee has come back," Arduino said. "I'm just focusing on track (this year). I don't think I will pursue varsity volleyball."

Arduino pulled out the 50 and 200 over Downers North's Prevail Bonga (7.4 and 29.5), a sophomore transfer from Lisle High School.

Arduino was pleased she didn't have to pursue anyone in the 4-lap relay. It looked as though she may have to come from behind, but Love took over first on the final turn before the handoff and Arduino held onto the lead the rest of the way. The Hilltoppers beat Downers North by .6.

"That was an awesome feeling," Arduino said. "I knew we were a little behind and I was like, 'Ok. I'm going to have to kick it in the anchor (leg),' but then I saw Micah kill it and do so well. I could just run and get us a better lead so it was a really good feeling to see Micah do that."

Connolly had a strong debut in her first indoor track race ever. She said Connolly, who ran outdoor track at Hadley Junior High

"It was different. I'm more used to running outside and here it's a bit harder to breathe," said Connolly, who ran outdoor track at Hadley Junior High. "It's a very confined space. It's much harder but I liked running in here."

Connolly led off the 3,200 relay in somewhat conservative fashion but her 2:37.4 split gave the Hilltoppers a lead they never relinquished. She later finished second (2:39.4) to Tammaru in the 800 with Hoffman third (2:40.3) and freshman Ella Roach fourth (2:41.1).

In the 3,200 relay, Tammaru's 2:34.7 split blew the race open on the second leg and the Hilltoppers won by nearly 50 seconds over Downers North (11:25.6).

"I felt really confident. In the beginning of the (relay), I was a little bit nervous, not knowing the girls I was competing against," Connolly said. "I was behind the girl from DGN and we had always known that they go out fast so I was thinking, 'Let her stay in front for a little bit but then I've got to go in front of her.' I was able to do that."

The 1,600 was decided by .4 as Shaver (5:56.4) and Oh (5:56.8) finished 1-2 within .4 of each other and more importantly both broke 6:00. Sophomore Olivia Rosley was fourth (6:22.0).

"I always manage to kick, even if I don't think I have anything left," Shaver said.

"That (finish) was fun. I felt like I had to kick it that last lap because (distance coach Paul Hass) was yelling at me, 'You're at 5:28 right now,' and I'm like, 'Man, I want to get under 6:00.' "

Oh's personal best for any 1,600 is 5:48 but this marked her indoor track debut – 10 laps around the Hilltoppers' tighter track rather than four on the outdoor track.

"It's a little bit harder on the inner track just because you're doing so many laps. It's more of a mental challenge," Oh said.

"It was awesome to have a teammate there, and that's probably what kept me going. It was hard, but I pushed myself as hard as I could. My legs were really hurting during that race. With Mary, I ran faster so it really helped to break 6:00."

Like Arduino, Shaver had a strong freshman track season. She battled a hip injury throughout cross country but recovered toward the end of the season and was the No. 6 finisher for the sophomore team's conference championship lineup. She has enjoyed uninterrupted training during the offseason.

"I feel strong right now. I'm hoping that it stays that way for the rest of the season," Shaver said. "I'm excited. I want to see how much I can improve this season."

Connolly and Oh already are feeling improvements thanks to cross country and off-season work. Connolly was second overall and Oh 25th at the sophomore Silver Meet.

Although she ran 800s at Hadley, Saturday's times were roughly 20 seconds faster than her eighth-grade best.

"I usually had like a 3:00 so getting that (2:37.4 split) was just insane," Connolly said. "With all of the training we did during cross country, it's really great to have."

Oh's offseason was hampered somewhat by a knee injury but she also is feeling the difference. She already is handling the distance work, even though at St. Petronille School, she most recently was used as a sprinter. She ran 800s in fifth grade but then was out in sixth grade with a torn calf muscle.

"I'm really excited to see how I'm going to improve this season and how my teammates are going to improve," Oh said. "I'm feeling really good. I love track. It's one of my favorite sports."

I thought cross country was really fun, too, but track is more of my favorite thing to do.” Hanson finished 1-2 in the 50 hurdles with freshman Amber Bode (9.4). The 1,600 relay won by 9.2 seconds.

Hohe won the 3,200 by 2:40 and Feeley won the 300 by 2.5 seconds. Sophomore Morgan Lemke (15:15.4) and Kreissler (49.6) were third and fourth in those respective races.

Love was second in long jump (14-3) and triple jump (30-2) to Bonga’s 16-0 and 32-2. Bode (29-1) and sophomore Bryn Lilly (28-0) were third and fifth in triple jump and freshman Yuvia Serna (13-6 1/2) was fifth in triple jump.

Sophomore Siena Pierce was second in shot put (27-3 1/2) and freshman Zoe Sandacz was third in high jump (4-7). Pierce’s indoor best as a freshman was 27-11.