

Already a veteran of girls cross country state meets, junior Janie Nabholz has joined the Glenbard West girls track program for the first time this season.

"I really want to run in college so I decided to specialize. I had to quit soccer, which is really sad," Nabholz said.

"I like (track) a lot. In middle school, I did outdoor track. It's different from cross country, what I'm used to. I like it more, the shorter distances. I'm so happy I tried it because I like it a lot."

Nabholz also enjoyed success in her first meet for the Hilltoppers in the indoor season opener Saturday, Feb. 13 in Glen Ellyn. The Hilltoppers scored 87.5 points to defeat West Suburban Conference Silver Division rival Downers Grove North (64.5) and Glenbard East (19).

Nabholz led off the first-place 3,200-meter relay with seniors Caitlyn Reick, Abigail Shaver and Kathryn Kenwood (10:05.8 manual time) and ran the third leg of the victorious 1,600 relay with sophomore Lindsey Payne, senior Grace Rogers and junior Sophie Cvengros (4:24.3).

Other event winners were junior Anna Gambol (34 feet-0 1/2 inch in shot put), Payne (3,200 in 10:45.5) and junior pole vaulter Claire Ficarella, who won a three-way tiebreaker at 6-6 that included junior teammate Kate Dillman.

The 3,200 relay won by easily by 13.5 seconds over Glenbard East. Nabholz contributed a team-best 2:27.8 split.

In the 1,600 relay, Nabholz also had that lineup's fastest split (1:03.5). She also took the lead on the backstretch of her final lap to put the Hilltoppers in front to stay before handing off to Cvengros, who anchored in 1:05.8.

"That was my first time ever running a 400," Nabholz said. "I just saw her (ahead of me) and (assistant coach Paul Hass) said, 'One lap left,' and then I just gave it everything."

Returning Hilltoppers already are ahead of last year's pace.

Payne, coming off second place in the Class 3A girls cross country state meet Nov. 7, ran a significant personal-best in the 3,200 compared with 10:56.34 fully-automatic time in her one indoor race last year. Second-place Rogers (11:31.8) also enjoyed an indoor personal best, about .8 faster than her fastest of 2015. Junior Lindsay Lifka was fourth (14:02.1).

Last year, Payne played for the varsity soccer team rather than compete outdoors but has said that she will compete for this entire track season.

Gambol easily surpassed her 32-4 1/2 indoor best of 2015 and nearly caught her 34-1 1/4 lifetime best from outdoors that was fourth at the Silver Meet. Gambol still needed her 34-0 1/2 on the last of her five throws to beat Downers North senior Samantha Wilson (33-2 1/2) after a then-best 33-2 on her fourth attempt. Junior Melina Thurmond was third with 33-2 on her first attempt.

Pole vault brought huge smiles to Ficarella and Dillman. Junior Maggie Mudge was fifth (5-6). In last year's opener, Dillman cleared 5-6 and Ficarella missed the opening height in her debut with the event. They both went on to clear as high as 7-0 outdoors.

"At the end of the (2015) season, we were at 7-0 so we were really excited to be almost there today," Ficarella said.

"The main thing for me is to keep up my speed, slow down at the bar. I just had to really focus on that. It was kind of a stretch to get over it, but it was good. Today, my last couple of practices have really been kind of rough and I was not feeling well so I didn't even think I was going to make starting height (5-0). My steps were all off. I was really excited and surprised (to win)."

As usual during the indoor season, pole vault practice time is at a premium because of having to share the fieldhouse with other sports, especially until the end of basketball season. The group also is awaiting the season debut of senior Jessica Michel, who cleared an all-time school-record 10-0 last spring. That height broke Jackie Benson's 9-3 that stood since 2001.

"We just need to do a lot of repetition so we can work out our kinks and all. For Claire and me to get farther, we have to start doing different techniques than to get over the lower bars.

Now we've just got to practice a bunch," Dillman said.

"It's exciting because we're the first group that's kind of started the pole vault program (again) at West. We kind of somewhat know what we're doing so that makes (head coach Kelly Hass) really happy about it."

In the 800, Kenwood (2:30.1) finished second to Downers North junior Emma Moravec (2:24.0), who took second at 3A state in the event last May (2:12.22).

Senior Cory Szabo was second in high jump (4-3) and long jump (15-10) to Downers North sophomore Isabel Maletich (16-8 1/2), who took fifth at 3A state last year with a school-record 38-0. Cvengros (15-1 1/2) and junior Grace Wagner (15-0 1/2) were third and fifth in long jump. Maletich also won triple jump (35-7 1/2), where junior Grace Zemenak was fifth (27-6).

The 4-lap relay of senior Emily Asselmeier, Ficarella, senior Bryanna McCullum and junior Siena Gagliano (1:42.4) was second to Downers North (1:31.7).

Sophomore Maddie Schrauth (1:08.3) and senior Nicole Rogus (1:08.7) were 2-3 in the 400 to Downers North junior Gina Kowalewicz (1:06.2).

Senior Kate Dorsey (5:37.8), Shaver (5:40.6) and junior Antonia Kunze (6:36.6) finished 2-3-5 in the 1,600 to Downers North senior Grace Maletich (5:35.9).

Senior Kelsey Lentz was fourth in the 50 hurdles (10.0) and Rogus was fifth in the 300 (48.6).