

Senior Emma Reifel already has had an amazing girls track career at Glenbard West, and there's still a final spring season remaining.

At her final West Suburban Conference Silver Division Indoor Meet March 15 at York, there was a little something more to accomplish. Reifel took care of it in historic proportions.

Reifel earned her first individual indoor title in impressive fashion. She won the 800-meter run in 2:15.73 fully-automatic time to set a Silver Meet record and break her indoor school-record.

"I went into it hoping to get a 2:15 so I was excited that I hit that and, of course, winning it and to take the record was fun," Reifel said. "The first 400 was a lot faster than I had hoped so I definitely felt it in the second half, but it was still good. I think it helped having everyone there cheering for you just going around. (And York has) a nice track."

The Hilltoppers had two more indoor school records in finishing second (76 points) in a tight battle behind Lyons Township (124), which won its second straight title.

Sophomore Emma Gambol won the 300 in an indoor school-record 41.35, her first sub-42 FAT performance in the event, and had two second-place individual finishes.

Junior Madeline Perez broke her school record in the 3,200 (10:28.18) to finish second in an epic 3,200 race with York senior standout Emma Fisher (10:26.06) and later was third in a great 1,600 race (5:06.64).

Senior Grace Walker, sophomore Mary Nevins and freshman Grace Rogers

also had top-six individual finishes.

LT only won three events but used tremendous depth to distance itself from a congested rest of the field. Glenbard West finished six points ahead of third-place Hinsdale Central (70). Second through last place was separated by 25 points.

“I figured we were going to be second. I would have liked to score a few more points to distance ourselves from third place a little more,” Glenbard West coach Kelly Hass said. “I think all of the coaches knew from the get go that this was going to be a much more even year.

“We have people doing a lion’s share of the work. Our goal outdoors is to spread that out a little more. It’s time to start sharing that load and the rest of the team is going to come up and do that. We always get better outdoors.”

That should mean even more success for Reifel, who a 2012 Class 3A state finalist in the 800 and was part of the state runner-up 3,200 relay that ran the second fastest time in the history of the girls state meet.

Reifel accomplished her goals and then some even though she won by 7.63 seconds over Downers Grove North junior Stephanie Urbancik (2:23.36).

Reifel broke her indoor record of 2:16.23 set in her final meet last season at the Top Times Indoor Classic. At the indoor Silver Meet at Proviso West, Reifel (2:17.15) was second to York senior Michelle Frigo (2:16.38), who won her third straight varsity title in then-record time.

“It was kind of fun just because (Frigo) got it last year but we were close. It

was fun to go back this year and just see that I'm definitely stronger," Reifel said.

Expecting Urbancik to start out fast, Reifel had a strong start and got out a little too fast. Then she tried to go even faster by mistake.

"I ran by in 30.8 and I thought (assistant coach Paul Hass) said a 38.0. I thought I was going slow so the second leg I tried to pick it up," Reifel said.

Even with all of the great middle distance runners in Glenbard West history, Reifel joins Nell Shields (2:22.3 in 1996) as the program's only varsity 800 indoor champions. Reifel helped the Hilltoppers win the 3,200 relay last year and the 1,600 relay in 2011, when Glenbard West won its first varsity indoor team title ever.

"That's exciting," Reifel said. "One thing that's helped me is my freshman year was really the first year that the distance program was really turned around. My sophomore year we were really a sprinting-based program. In the past few years, it's been helpful just to develop me more as a distance runner."

Gambol and Reifel (42.73) started the meet off strong by finishing 1-3 in the 300. They capped the meet by joining Nevins and senior Cynthia Mote to finish third in the 1,600 relay (4:12.48).

Gambol broke Bridget Flanagan's 300 indoor school record of 42.09 and won by .8 over LT senior Sarah Kreikemeier (42.15), who later beat Gambol in the 400. Reifel also ran a personal best.

Gambol entered as the No. 1 seed with a converted 42.14 from March 2.

The indoor Silver Meet record is 40.99.

“My goal was to break 42 with the FAT. I was happy about achieving my goal and to break the record on top of it,” Gambol said. “I was kind of eyeing the record because I really wanted to break it. I’m like, ‘I know I can break this record.’ It was right by 42.0 so I really wanted to break that, and if I broke that, I’d break the record.”

Even though she didn’t win the 3,200, Perez (10:28.18) dusted her previous 3,200 season best of 10:39.34 from Feb. 16 and broke the 10:34.2 indoor school record also set by Shields in 1996, the year she swept the 3,200 and 1,600 titles at the state meet as a senior.

“It was great having some competition to race against. Emma Fisher and I pushed each other (in both races) to run the times that we did so that was nice,” Perez said. “It’s just a good stepping stone. I’m happy where I’m at right now, but I know what I need to work on and it’s exciting.”

“I thought Madeline Perez was nothing short of amazing. Where else in the entire state can you run that time and get second place?” Kelly Hass said. “Competing makes you stronger, and if anybody internalizes that, it’s Madeline Perez, no doubt about it, with what she does day in and day out. That output was impressive.”

When Perez won the girls cross country state title Nov. 6, Fisher was second with the two fastest 3.0-mile girls times ever on the annual Detweiller Park state meet course.

In their first race against each other since then March 8 at York, Perez ran the 1,600 fresh and pulled out the victory (4:59.29) with an indoor lifetime-

best fieldhouse record over Fisher (5:05.55), who earlier ran with the 3,200 relay.

At the Silver Meet, Perez stayed within a stride or two of Fisher throughout both races but couldn't prevent Fisher from defending her 3,200 title and winning York's first 1,600 title since 2003.

"(Fisher) held me off. I was frustrated, but I just couldn't get around her," Perez said. "I surged, and she just held me off every time. I commend her for doing that and I think that's also how we got to the times that we did, just from those surges."

The 1,600 finish was crazy as Fisher (5:06.17), Hinsdale Central senior Jill Hardies (5:06.35) and Perez (5:06.64) finished within .47 of each other. Like the 3,200, Fisher and Perez were neck and neck the whole way until Hardies, in her only event, made a furious kick during the final lap.

Hardies appeared to temporarily take the lead coming out of the final turn before Fisher answered. Hardies is a four-time all-state cross country runner who was eighth in November despite battling a foot injury.

"I knew (Hardies) in the past had a really good kick so I knew to expect her at the end. I could hear from the fans, people were cheering, that she was coming," Perez said. "I just tried my hardest to sprint at the end, but I just didn't have enough to get them. They just had a little bit more in the tank than me."

Gambol had enough energy to do well in her busy four-event meet. Besides winning the 300, she was second in triple jump (35 feet-5 inches) and the 400 (1:01.35) and ran the second leg on the 1,600 relay.

Gambol was beaten by two seniors – Proviso West's Jabria Stainback (36-3) and Kreikemeier (lifetime-best 59.26).

This is the first year of triple jump for Gambol, who jumped a personal-best 36-0 previously at York.

"Especially since I started this year, I wasn't really competing confident, I guess," Gambol said. "Then I jumped 36-0. I've been improving and I'm competing with the really good jumpers in the conference."

Gambol achieved her best triple jump before her track events. The workload nearly got the best of Gambol in the 400 but she reached back for a vicious surge in the final 100 meters to pull out second by .03 after being near last in the top heat.

"I was kind of feeling it, but then all of a sudden something popped in me and I was like, 'Oh my gosh. This race is not going good,'" Gambol said. "At the end of it, I focused down on my race to make it count. I'm not going to settle for fifth place. It's conference. I just went for it like I could do it. (I thought), 'I'm far enough away from the finish line that if I really try, I can get them.' "

With Reifel anchoring against Kreikemeier, the 1,600 relay missed catching second-place LT (4:12.16) by just .32. Downers North won in an indoor school-record 4:06.29.

"Emma Reifel is incredibly impressive to run a 300, an 800 and come back with a (58.9 relay) split, simply amazing," Kelly Hass said.

While Perez battled for the 3,200 title, Rogers (11:32.49) pulled out third by

.42 in a fight to the finish with Hinsdale Central junior Becca Marcotte (11:32.91). It was a personal best for Rogers by more than 14 seconds.

“I felt like I was going as hard as I could,” Rogers said. “I was worried. I didn’t know it was for third and I was worried I wouldn’t get her. I know that feeling of a really tight neck-and-neck finish, really scary.”

Rogers had little time to celebrate. She was competing a distance double for the first time. She was 11th in the 1,600 in 5:44.27.

“It was hard (doing both races),” Rogers said. “I was expecting it to be kind of hard, but I think I prepared myself well for doing what I needed to do between the races. I tried my best and I’m happy.”

Walker was the Hilltoppers’ fourth dual individual placewinner. She tied for fourth in high jump (4-10) and was sixth in long jump (15-1).

The 3,200 relay (Mote, junior Annika Manning and seniors Kate Majewski and Rachel Farley in 10:21.26) was fifth.

Besides the 1,600 relay, Nevins also turned in a personal best in the 400 for fifth (42.09).

“Mary Nevins had an awesome meet. She’s that quiet kid that’s one of the most dependable athletes on the team,” Kelly Hass said. “I probably could have asked her to do two more events and she would have done them. She was where we needed her.”