

Glenbard West senior Kate Majewski's 2012 girls track season ended all too soon because of health issues, well before the West Suburban Conference Silver Division Meet.

For Friday's Silver Meet, Majewski not only was competing but found herself leading off the Hilltoppers' 3,200-meter relay for the first time.

"I feel like it's almost a little bit easier because you just go, boom. You're not waiting too long (to run) so you don't have that much time to get the nerves," Majewski said.

"I love the energy of the first leg. Everyone's all together at that point. I was really happy that (Glenbard West distance coach Paul Hass) put me in as leading off."

The finish was even better.

With another great anchor leg from senior Emma Reifel, the Hilltoppers won the race for the first of five event victories at Lyons Township's south campus.

It's the first varsity track conference title for Majewski, who was second in the frosh-soph 1,600 outdoors in 2011.

"Junior year was a little bit of a struggle, but I've pulled through for senior year," Majewski said. "I love the 4-by-800 because there's such a team aspect. I'm just really happy."

The Hilltoppers (122.75 points) finished second to LT (134.75), which completed the sweep of the outdoor and indoor Silver titles for the second

year in a row.

Junior Madeline Perez (1,600 in 4:57.15 FAT) and Reifel (800 in 2:21.48) won their events for the second year in a row with Perez breaking the converted 4:58.64 conference-meet record time that had stood since 1984.

Sophomore Emma Gambol won the 100 (12.65) and 200 (25.84) with personal bests to become the first Glenbard West runner to win both events at one conference meet. Perez and Reifel are Glenbard West's first two-time conference champions in their events.

Majewski, junior Madeline Perez, sophomore Julia Sakach and Reifel won the 3,200 relay in a season-best 9:25.21 over Downers Grove North (season-best 9:27.48), which won the indoor Silver title March 15.

Reifel got the baton in a close second but delivered a 2:14.4 anchor split for the victory. While the other three girls won the 3,200 relay at the 2012 Silver meet with graduated Maddie Nagle in a meet-record 9:06.69, this was the first varsity conference track title for Majewski.

"Once (Reifel) came around that corner, and we kind of knew we had it, that was the moment where I was just so proud of all of us. When she finished, we were all just so happy and smiling and hugging," Majewski said.

"That was a great moment and we'll remember that forever. It'll be in the kiosk (at Biester Gym) and it'll be a lot of fun. I'm glad to finish the conference season on that."

Majewski was elated to have plenty of company. She was among 14 Hilltoppers who combined for 19 all-conference performances either with

top-five finishes in individual events or top-three finishes with relays.

Earning all-conference honors were seniors Nina Fraticola, Majewski, Cynthia Mote, Reifel and Grace Walker, juniors JaSharra Clark, Grace Lupo, Perez and Erin Spiech, sophomores Gambol, Lisa Luczak, Mary Nevins and Sakach and freshman Grace Rogers.

“(Glenbard West throws coach Nick Posegay) was saying all-conference means you’re forever in the kiosk of Glenbard West,” Perez said. “There are so many girls tonight who did it, and I’m so proud that they can be there forever because they deserve it.”

Fraticola joined Majewski in earning varsity all-conference honors for the first time as a senior by taking fifth in discus (92-6), six inches from sixth.

“Seeing (Majewski), how excited she got about it, I think it made the whole (3,200 relay) win so much sweeter,” said Reifel, who will run next season for the University of Wisconsin.

“Last year we had a great time in the 4-by-800 (school-record 9:00.72 for second at Class 3A state meet). I feel like maybe this year, just seeing it from a whole different perspective, seeing someone else have that chance to win it, it was really sweet.”

Glenbard West had all-conference performances in 10 of the 12 track events, amassing a meet-best 111 points after a rough start in the field events. LT had 62 points in track events and a meet-best 72.75 points in the six field events with firsts in shot put, discus, high jump and triple jump.

There should be even more great moments to come for the Hilltoppers.

They will go after berths for the Class 3A state meet at the York Sectional Friday. Top-two sectional finishers automatically qualify for state as well as entries that achieve state-qualifying standards at the sectional.

“We’re figuring some things out, and we’re still pretty young,” Glenbard West head coach Kelly Hass said. “We nicked and dined our way in on a lot of places. We ran really well, really well. We didn’t field event very well,” Hass said.

“Emma Gambol was amazing. Madeline Perez was amazing. Emma Reifel we said was the Queen of the Quad Cities because she ran four events – and she ran them pretty well.”

Perez once again had the performance of the meet, breaking another meet record despite cold and windy conditions and being comfortably in front. The previous record of 4:58.64 converted time was set by Downers Grove North junior Tracy Laughlin in 1984, when she went on to finish third at the then Class AA state meet after also being second in the 3,200.

“We didn’t know what (the record) was so we just had to go out and compete,” Paul Hass said. “We knew that (Stanford-bound York senior) Emma Fisher was going to be coming after her and (North Carolina-bound Hinsdale Central senior Jill) Hardies. She just had to run her race and see if they could hang with her and, fortunately, they couldn’t.”

It had been the oldest outright varsity conference meet record still standing. 1982 meet records for the 800 relay (1:43.14 converted) and high jump (5-6 by Glenbard West’s Kristi Moore) have since been tied.

Perez said she didn’t know until Saturday that she officially broke the

record.

“I knew it was a couple of decades old, but that was pretty cool – 29 years, a long time ago,” Perez said.

“People had mentioned maybe, possibly (Friday) and I knew it was close. I kind of totally forgot about the record before the race and when I was racing. It’s cool to have my name in the West Suburban Conference (records) because there have been a lot of great girls who have been through it in the past and are in it right now, too.”

Among the other current distance standouts, Fisher ended up a distant second in the 1,600 (5:08.51) after winning the 3,200 (10:38.54) by nearly 30 seconds over Luczak (11:07.24). Hardies, hampered again by a foot injury that affected the end of her cross country season, was third in the 1,600 (5:12.46), her first race of the meet.

At the indoor Silver Meet, Perez had one of the greatest performances ever without winning a single event. In the 3,200, she ended up second (10:28.18) to Fisher (10:26.06) and third in the 1,600 (5:06.64), just .47 behind Fisher (5:06.17), in a wild finish between them and second-place Hardies (5:06.35), who made a monstrous kick in the final 200 meters.

“Last time I was kicking myself that I got eight points (for the team by placing second) instead of 10 and what not, but, yeah, it was exciting (to win the 1,600),” Perez said. “Emma Fisher doubled and I know it’s not easy to do. I know how she was feeling because it was hard, and all of those other girls, too (like Luczak). I’ve been in their shoes before so I know how they’re feeling.”

Perez still had enough energy Friday for a 1:03.8 anchor split on the 1,600 relay with Reifel, Nevins and Clark. The Hilltoppers (4:07.27) finished second to Downers North (4:02.38).

“That’s the thing I love about conference. You are doing everything you can for the team,” Perez said. “I knew there was a possibility I would be in (the 1,600 relay) at the beginning, but I wasn’t so sure. I could kind of tell (Kelly Hass) was going to ask me. She’s like, ‘Yeah, could you go?’ I was like, ‘Yeah. Anything for the team.’ ”

Reifel, who opened with a team-best 58.3 split, was running her second 400 of the meet, as well as two 800s, in either the open event or with relays.

“It was definitely a challenge, but for whatever reason, my legs were feeling better,” Reifel said. “I think just as I was running, my legs were getting looser almost for whatever reason. I think also with the adrenaline of the night, you’re excited and going out there for your team so I think that makes it a little easier.”

Gambol was in her usual four events, although the four often changes from meet to meet. Despite the workload, she was the fastest runner that night.

Gambol won the 100 (12.65) over Proviso West junior Emani Johnson (12.80), who had the fastest preliminary time (12.71). Gambol (25.84) then won the 200 by .74 over Johnson (26.50) with a personal-best time, edging her 25.85 at Wheaton Warrenville South’s Tiger Invitational April 26.

At last year’s Silver Meet, Gambol was second in the 100 (13.07) to graduated Proviso West’s Paige Greenwood (12.92) and fourth in the 200 (26.47).

“I’m really happy that I get to be the first one to do that (for Glenbard West) because I get to represent my school by winning the 100 and 200,” Gambol said.

“I feel like last year was all new for me. I was at the competition level, but this year I feel like I’m more up there and at the same level. I knew I was up there (in seeds) but I wasn’t positive I could win them both. I just try to go into it with a positive mindset and not psych myself out, but not be overly confident either.”

Gambol also is the first athlete since 2006 to sweep the varsity 100 and 200 Silver titles.

With her 300 Silver title indoors, Gambol is the first athlete to win those three races since 1998. She didn’t run the 200 indoors at conference, and there’s a 55 dash rather than 100.

In two new events this year, Gambol also was second in the 300 hurdles (48.60) to Downers North senior Rebecca Ridderhoff (46.53) and fifth in triple jump (33-7).

At sectionals, Gambol is scheduled to compete in the 300 hurdles, triple jump and two relays.

“I usually just get really excited to run the 200 because I don’t get to run it that much. When I do, my adrenaline’s still pumping from the 300 hurdles (two events before) so it’s a good feeling going into the race,” Gambol said.

“I’m really satisfied with (this meet). I got four all-conference, which I’m really happy with,” Gambol said. “The 100 and 200, it’s such an honor to win

both of them.”

The open 400 was an additional race that Reifel usually doesn't compete at major events. With that race still to come, Reifel focused more on simply winning the 800. Her 2:21.48 still prevailed by 1.82 seconds.

Reifel nearly pulled out the 400 as well, finishing second (58.75) and just .33 behind Downers North junior Stephanie Urbancik's lifetime-best 58.42. Urbancik has been on the Trojans' all-state 3,200 relays the past two seasons, including the 2011 3A state champion. Nevins (59.85) also broke 1:00 to take fourth.

Last year, the Hilltoppers finished second at state in the 3,200 relay (9:00.72) to Wheaton Warrenville South (8:59.03) with the two fastest times ever run at the state finals. Friday marked the first time since then that Reifel, Perez and Sakach ran together in the 3,200 relay – and the last.

“We were just reminiscing like, oh yeah, getting the gang back together,” Sakach said. “We were just kind of like, ‘Just go out there and see what happens,’ so (winning) was like a nice added bonus.”

Perez will focus on the distance double of the 3,200 and 1,600 along with Luczak. Reifel will focus on the 800 and 1,600 relay at sectionals. Sakach, who made an admirable recovery from a torn labrum last summer just to return from the lineup, ended her season Friday with a 2:24.9 split.

“We were laughing, saying it's kind of funny because Kate Majewski has kind of a similar body build to Maddie Nagle,” Reifel said. “It was really fun to kind of put that together and really go out there and see how we could do.”



Majewski is expected to start off the 3,200 relay with an all-freshman lineup of Rogers, Caitlyn Reick and Christina Sedall. Paul Hass said Majewski's 2:26.3 split Friday, just shy of her fastest split from a middle leg, and Sakach were instrumental in the victory. Perez's 2:19.2 second leg put the Hilltoppers back among the leaders.

"We were very impressed with (Majewski's race)," Paul Hass said. "We just needed Julia and Kate to try and stay close to Downers North, close enough so (Perez and Reifel) could do some damage, and that's what happened."

In November, Majewski ended girls cross country by competing at the 3A state meet for the first time since sophomore year and helped the Hilltoppers finish third as a team.

In her final home track race at Duchon Field Tuesday, Majewski won the 1,600 in a season-best 5:36.2 manual time in the Hilltoppers' quadrangular with Downers North, Willowbrook and Hinsdale South. After Friday's victory, Majewski finally met LT senior and fellow 3,200 relay runner Randie Speir, who will run with her at Texas Christian University.

"It's kind of unreal (this week), especially because last year I didn't have that great of a track season. Outdoors, I wasn't even a part of it for the most part," Majewski said. "To finish out high school track like this is really fun because I'll always remember this."

Luczak, who has overcome her share of injuries this track season, overcame an unexpected one Friday. Taking a nap before coming to school, Luczak got out of bed awkwardly and bruised her right ankle, the healthier of her two ankles.

"I fell down on it and twisted it and right then I got up and I was like, 'Oh, I

did something wrong.’ It was one of those moments where you know that you hurt it somehow,” Luczak said.

The pain continued through her warmup for the 3,200, but Paul Hass had her continue the workout while monitoring the situation.

“After I put my spikes on and everything, it just miraculously disappeared,” Luczak said. “It was one of those things where I knew I probably could run it so I was like, ‘If I think I can run it and if my coach wants me to run it, then I know I should trust him.’ ”

While Fisher dominated the 3,200, Luczak (11:07.24) coasted the final two laps yet finished comfortably ahead of Rogers (11:31.68), who pulled out third by .97 with a strong kick. In the 1,600, Luczak (4th, 5:13.87) was outkicked by Hardies (5:12.46), who was running her first race, and was 2.42 seconds ahead of fifth.

“I’ll be totally fine and even if it hurts, I’m still going to run (sectionals),” Luczak said Tuesday. “It feels totally fine so I can’t let anything bad happen again. I’m like, ‘OK. I need to make sure when I get out of bed that I go slow and take my time waking up.’ ”

In just her second meet back competing from a knee injury, Walker tied for second in high jump (4-11) behind LT sophomore Emma Haugen (5-3), the defending 3A state champion. Lupo (4-7) was among four jumpers to share fifth.

Pulling out fifth place individually, the last all-conference spot, were Mote (300 hurdles in season-best 50.92), Spiech (100 high hurdles in season-best 18.30), Fraticola (92-6 in discus) and Clark (100 in 13.32).

Fraticola, whose personal best is 94-3 April 16, pulled out fifth place by six inches, a huge improvement over her seventh-place 78-4 in 2012. She also was seventh in shot (28-7 1/2) and would have needed a lifetime best to reach fifth (30-9 1/2).

“I’ve been waiting for (all-conference) for my four years to have this happen. At first, I was kind of like, ‘Aw, I’m not going to get it.’ And then I got it. It’s just so exciting for me so I’m happy with it,” Fraticola said.

“Either (event) would have been fine. I’m really happy with the discus. This year is when I really caught the hang of it and what to do.”

Mote also was an all-conference fifth in the 300 hurdles on varsity as a sophomore (49.49) and was third last year (49.78). Mote usually jumps as well, but she focused in the 300 hurdles to give her the best chance of repeating.

Mote was .36 from fourth with the sixth-place finisher 1.05 seconds behind Mote.

“That was something definitely that was really important to me, and I was really glad that Miss Hass put me in events so I could do that,” Mote said.

When Kelly Hass came for her usual pep talk right before Mote’s race, it consisted of no words.

“(Hass) literally walked up to me and just poked me in the chest, right where the heart is, and just walked away,” Mote said. “I knew exactly what she meant. She was right. Run with heart, and that’s what I did.”

“Fortunately for me, having that drive, I guess I wasn’t really questioning going in whether I could get all-conference. It was more of a, ‘Let’s see how good we can do and what it’s going to be in (timewise) to get me there.’”

Spiech had to fight for her all-conference accomplishment – twice. Spiech arrived as the No. 6 seed, and in the prelims she clipped a hurdle, which could have ruined her chances at the eight-person finals. She pulled through with the fifth-fastest qualifying time (18.42), faster than her previous season best of 18.74 converted.

“I was scared when I hit it, but I had to remain focused and I did and I then I made it to finals,” Spiech said. “Mrs. Hass told me I had a chance (at all-conference). I was very close to one of the girls that was seeded higher than me. I came into finals focused, knowing I could beat her if I really wanted to.”

In the finals, Spiech ran even faster, pulling out the last all-conference spot by .17.

“I feel like it’s my best race I’ve had all season,” Spiech said. “It’s been a rough season so far and I’ve worked so hard this past week and the past couple of weeks. It’s finally good to get a reward for everything I’ve done.”

The 400 relay (Clark, freshmen Emma Winans and Jessica Michel, Nevins in 52.01) and 800 relay (Clark, Walker, Winans, Michel in 1:50.64) both were fourth, .03 and .77 from third place, respectively.

Reick was sixth in the 800 (2:25.18), .49 from fifth. Winans was the lone freshman to reach the finals of the 200 and was eighth (27.64).