

Senior Dee Dee Burns is among the Glenbard West throwers waiting for assistant coach Nick Posegay to return full-time after he finishes his coaching obligations with the wrestling program.

Burns will have plenty to tell him after her performance in the Hilltoppers' triangular meet Saturday, Feb. 22, at Downers Grove North.

Burns threw a career-best 30 feet-7 inches in shot put for a fourth-place finish that helped the Hilltoppers score 108 points and defeat Palatine (82), Downers North (57) and Crete-Monee (43).

Senior Madeline Perez won the 1,600-meter run in 4:58.8, the state's fastest time this season based on results reported to DyeStat Illinois. Other event winners were junior Lisa Luczak (3,200 in 11:13.8), sophomores Lindsay Graham (800 in 2:24.4) and Emma Winans (300 in 44.6) and the 4-lap relay of junior Emma Gambol, sophomore Jessica Michel, senior JaSharra Clark and sophomore Isabella Salafatinos (1:29.4).

Burns never had thrown further than 30 feet in any meet with a career-best 29-10 late last April. In the Feb. 15 season opener at Glenbard West, she had a second-place 29-1, two feet better than her indoor best from 2013.

"(Last week, Posegay) told me I did pretty well because I have him (as a teacher) for first period in school. I'll have to tell him about today on Monday, if he's back (full-time). He better be back," Burns said. "I knew I've been hitting (30 feet) in practice. I knew it was bound to happen."

Burns achieved her personal best on the first of four throws. Burns credits her early success to training, her coaching staff and senior thrower Ashley Schleck. Assistant coach Mark Staron has been overseeing the throwers until Posegay returns.

"Last year, (Schleck) helped me get the glide (release) down a lot. Even though (the coaches) push us hard, I think it still helps us a lot," Burns said. "Now that I've hit 30 – that was my first goal – I'm going to try and move it up to 31, 33. I've surprised myself a lot."

Perez ran just one event in the season opener, leading off the 3,200 relay. On Saturday, Perez was fresh for the 1,600, and she won by 30 seconds.

"It's a shorter (160-meter) track, you don't wear spikes on it. It was just kind of those early ones that you're just kind of using to shake off the cobwebs and get back into the swing of things," Perez said.

"I just kind of wanted to see how I felt. I tried to be consistent throughout the race, just test myself a little bit. You take those first couple of races to not quite remember how to race but get your body back to what it's like again. It was really exciting, though, and especially for the team to do so well, from all of the field events to the running events, it was a great day for everyone."

The 2012 3A state champion in cross country, Perez did not compete the majority of this past season recovering from a calf injury. She took third at state Nov. 9 and helped the Hilltoppers capture their first state team title.

Perez anticipates competing in multiple events soon.

"I'm super healthy, knock on wood, no problems and my training's been progressing nicely. I'm happy with how everything's feeling right now and hopefully it just gets better from here," Perez said. "I was sick two weeks ago so we decided the first meet not to push anything. Indoors is always tough, hard on the body with all of those tons of laps (in distance races)."

Luczak, who has been working back from a preseason hamstring injury, surprised herself with her dominating time in the 3,200. Luczak won by nearly 40 seconds over Downers North sophomore Kaitlyn Bonfield (11:53.1) after a first-place 5:27.5 for the 1,600 in the opener.

"My goal was to get under 11:30 and even that was iffy. I wasn't sure I could do that, but when I got the 11:13, it was like, 'Yes, I'm back,' so I was really happy," Luczak said.

"Of course, I'm still not up to full mileage and I'm still not doing the same

workouts, the same length of workouts as other girls are, but I'm getting there. I've still been able to get workouts in so that's pretty nice."

The 4-lap relay won by 2.1 seconds. The Hilltoppers' 3,200 relay (Julia Sakach, Lindsay Graham, Megan Ozog, Grace Rogers in 9:59.5) and 1,600 relay (Graham, Clark, Winans, Gambol in 4:23.5) were close seconds to Downers North's 9:56.7 and 4:22.0.

Besides winning the 800 by 3.4 seconds, Graham had team-best splits in both relays of 2:22.9 and 1:04.4.

Winans won the 300 by .1. Gambol was second in the 55 (7.6) after a virtual tie with Palatine junior Basirat Ignila and third in long jump (15-7). Erin Spiech (55 hurdles in 10.1), Rogers (800 in 2:31.5) and Salafatinos (200 in 29.2) were third, Amani Bader (29-10 in triple jump) was fourth, and Grace Lupo and Madelyn O'Gorman were fourth and fifth in high jump at 4-6. Morgan McEnroe (400 in 1:09.0) and O'Gorman (13-9 in long jump) were fifth.

Pole vault was not accounted for in the results, but the Hilltoppers could have their most success there in recent memory.

First-timer Michel cleared 7-0. Junior Allie Roule (6-0) and seniors Faith Bischoff (5-0) and Madeline O'Brien (5-0) also competed.

"I just thought it looked fun so I thought I'd try it," Michel said. "I just wanted to get over (the 5-0 starting height). It was good, felt good. It's a different feel for it."

Michel said she wanted to try pole vault as a freshman but wasn't able to because of her numerous track events. She has some pre-season experience from attending Sunday jumping camps at Lincoln-Way North.

"That was the first time I've ever really pole vaulted," Michel said. "I'm just trying it out. Hopefully (I'll sprint) a lot."

Senior Chloe Powell also hopes to contribute to the sprinters, and she's

off to a good start. She ran a season-best 8.2 in the 55 and a 31.4 for the 200.

As she begins her third track season, Powell is pleased just to be competing. She hurt her quadricep muscle as a sophomore and had more ailments last season.

"I haven't been able to run as well at the beginning of the season as I was able to this meet," Powell said. "In past years, I've kind of been injured at the beginning of the season so this year I've had a really good start, being able to prepare a couple of weeks before my first meets.

"I think definitely icing, making sure after practices that I'm stretching and icing and taking it a little bit easier, starting off slower so I can build up to kind of practicing harder has been really helpful."

Outdoors, Powell will probably run the 100 and 200, where she hopes to break 30 seconds. Even after her previous injuries, Powell said she was determined to return for her senior season.

"Definitely there wasn't any doubt," Powell said. "I actually did basketball my first two years, but after doing track my sophomore year, it's become my favorite sport."

Frosh-soph level

Sophomore Abby Moody arrived late for the indoor track season after being a part of Glenbard West's state-qualifying competitive dance team.

In her season debut Saturday, Feb. 22, at Downers Grove North, Moody showed some impressive track moves in an event she hadn't tried until the day before, high jump.

"I just didn't want to miss the first one (4 feet). I just wanted to get over the starting height," Moody said.

Moody may be a newcomer to the event, but she cleared five heights, concluding with 4-8, for first place on the frosh-soph level in helping the Hilltoppers win the four-team meet. Glenbard West edged Palatine 79-71, followed by Downers North (54 points) and Crete-Monee (36).

Other event winners were Sophie Cvengros (300-meter dash in 47.7), Kathryn Kenwood (1,600 in 5:53.2), Anna Gambol (28-3 in shot put), the 4-lap relay (Sharon Murray, Cvengros, Nicole Rogus, Emily Asselmeier in 1:33.8) and the 3,200 relay (Kenwood, Caitlyn Reick, Maddy Burt, Abby Shaver in 10:46.8).

Moody, who usually competes at 800 and 1,600 meters, cleared 4-0, 4-2, 4-4, 4-6 and 4-8 on her third and final attempt. Sophomore Katie Goleash was fifth (4-2).

"I was kind of scared because I'd never done it before in a meet," Moody said. "After a couple (of heights), I was like, 'OK. I can do this. I felt like I got the rhythm of it so it's better.'"

Moody said she originally wasn't going to compete in the meet, but things changed during practice Friday around the high jump pit.

"Other people were just trying it out so (assistant coach Mark Staron) asked me if I wanted to try. I just tried it out and it was really fun so I tried it in a meet," Moody said. "I just got in the meet for high jump."

Moody began dancing as a seventh-grader at Hadley Junior High School, where she also competed on the track team. At the second IHSA state meet for competitive dance Jan. 31-Feb. 1 in Bloomington, the Hilltoppers finished 11th at the state preliminaries (84.90 points) among the 30 qualifiers, just .12 from a top-10 finish to advance to the state finals.

"I think definitely the flexibility (from dancing) helps with getting over the bar," Moody said.

The Hilltoppers went 1-2 in the 300 with Cvengros and Perez (49.5) and 1-3 in the 1,600 with Kenwood and Reick (5:54.9) and shot with Gambol and Bekah Dau (25-3).

Shaver (2:41.4) and Jenna Kelly (2:47.9) were second and third in the 800. Burt (11.0) and Kelsey Lentz (11.3) were third and fifth in the 55 hurdles, and Kate Dorsey (12:27.5) and Nicole Berneche (13:03.9) were third and fifth in the 3,200. Taking fourth and fifth were Kate Dillman (24-1) and Claire Ficarella (24-1) in triple jump and Cvengros (30.8) and Asselmeier (30.8) in the 200. Claire Filippelli was fourth in the 400 (1:14.5) and Asselmeier was fifth in the 55 (8.3).

-- by Bill Stone