

Glenbard West sophomore Anna Gambol is beyond considering the school's girls track and field frosh-soph record distance for the discus.

With Gambol now a fixture on the varsity, her distances are not eligible for the lower-level record books.

The distance really on Gambol's mind is 117 feet-6 inches – the state-qualifying standard.

On Saturday, April 11, she began that quest with a lifetime-best 108-4 to win the event at the seven-team Mustang Invitational at Downers Grove South.

"It felt really great because I know that all of my hard work paid off," Gambol said.

"I feel like I performed really well. I could just feel going in there that I was going to do really well and the weather was really nice, which really helped."

The Hilltoppers (68 points) finished fourth after winning last year's title. The host Mustangs (124.5) prevailed, followed by West Suburban Conference Silver Division rivals Lyons Township (104) and Hinsdale Central (97). Geneva (64.5), Loyola Academy (59) and Glenbard North (41) were fifth through seventh.

Junior Grace Rogers (3,200-meter run in season-best 11:25.51 fully automatic time) and the 3,200 relay of juniors Kathryn Kenwood, Katie Bassett, Sharon Murray and Abby Shaver (10:01.86) were second. Senior Emma Gambol (15-7 in long jump), Anna's sister, Kenwood (1,600 in lifetime-best 5:15.77) and junior Jessica Michel (8-6 in pole vault) were third.

Anna Gambol won the discus title by 3-5 over Loyola junior Francesca LaToracca (104-11) with two more sophomores taking third and fourth. Gambol also had throws of 105 and 102 feet Saturday.

Gambol now has twice thrown beyond the frosh-soph school record of 107-5 by Shelley Homolka in 2003. The varsity record is Angela Bray's 127-5 from 1999.

The 108-5 on Gambol's last of three throws in prelims beat her previous personal record of 108-1 that won the varsity title at the 2014 outdoor Silver Meet. Gambol threw a meet-best 105-2 in the chilly outdoor opener Wednesday, April 8, a non-scored dual meet with Lyons Township at Duchon Field.

"I was surprised (by a PR this early) but I've been wanting the goal of around 110 and to beat my PR from last year. I was surprised but really happy with that," said Gambol, who also was sixth in shot put (32-4).

"Sometimes I can't get my right foot to the middle or I over rotate (in the throwing circle for discus). I've just been trying to work on that and to be more aggressive at the front of the circle. And the shot kind of plays into it, too, just kind of form similarities. I work on both shot and discus form indoors."

Rogers' solid time in the 3,200 was only a tinge bittersweet. She finished second to Geneva junior McKenzie Altmayer's meet-record 11:10.02 after Rogers won the 3,200 at the invite the previous two years but with slower times.

Rogers won the invite in 2014 (11:33.47) by 4.5 seconds and in 2013 (11:36.15) by 10.60 seconds. Conditions were colder and certainly windier both previous years than Saturday.

"It's good to win but that's not really the point I guess," Rogers said. "It was awesome to win it my freshman year and sophomore year. Knowing I had a better time this year, I'm not really disappointed I didn't win it, considering I ran a good race and had a good time."

Altmayer, an all-state 11th at state cross country Nov. 8, broke the 11:13.64 meet record set by Stagg senior Krista Moylan in 2009.

In her first 3,200 since March 13 indoors at York, Rogers beat that time (11:32.65) by seven seconds and also was more than eight seconds ahead of third-place LT junior Vanessa Flaherty (11:34.00), a 2014 cross country individual state qualifier.

Junior Kate Dorsey was fifth (11:58.74) in just her second meet back after being

sidelined since an injury forced her to drop out of the junior varsity race at the conference meet in cross country. Dorsey was first in the 800 and ran with the first-place 3,200 relay Wednesday.

"I was really happy with how I did and I know (distance coach Paul Hass) was really happy," Rogers said. "It felt really good. Mr. Hass gave me good advice to run with (Altmayer) the whole time. She kind of lost me the last 800. I didn't have anything to be disappointed with."

The 3,200 relay (10:01.86) also placed second to Geneva (9:57.02) with Downers South (10:18.37) considerably back in third. Shaver anchored in a lifetime-best split of 2:24.7.

Kenwood and Shaver came back impressively in the 1,600. Kenwood was third in 5:15.77 and Shaver was fifth in 5:20.91 – both lifetime bests.

The state-qualifying standard for the 1,600 is 5:15.24.

"I was not expecting that (5:15.77) at all," Kenwood said. "The people pushing me (caused that). Without them, I don't know if I'd be able to go that fast. You want to stay with them. That was pretty much it, and then all of the workouts (Paul Hass) always has us do. He trains us right."

Kenwood said she also was motivated for the 1,600 after her 2:26.2 split to lead off the 3,200 relay fell shy of her fastest split. Kenwood topped her previous 1,600 best (5:20.85 March 13) by more than five seconds.

With help from Kenwood, Shaver beat her previous best 1,600 of 5:29.84 from March 5. The two often train together in the distance group.

"Oh yeah, for sure (the competition helped) and I know for me, seeing Kathryn ahead of me, I'm always like, 'OK. I can stay with her,' " Shaver said. "It helps. If no one was with me, that would make it 20 times harder, but they push us all."

The distance races were competitive as usual even with the absence of several

top performers. Junior Lindsay Graham, second at state last year in the 3,200 and coming off an indoor school-record 10:22.53 March 28, did not compete. Three-year state qualifier and Butler University-bound senior Lisa Luczak also has yet to compete this season.

Hinsdale Central junior Annie Zaher, the defending 1,600 state champion, and sophomore Alexa Haff, an all-state sixth in last year's 3,200 also were out. Downers South senior Abby Kargol and sophomore Michaela Hackbarth were in California to compete in the annual Arcadia Invitational.

Junior Caitlyn Reick was fourth in the 800 (2:26.10) after leading the first half of the race in 1:10.6. Hinsdale Central's Grace McCabe, one of two freshmen in the top three, won in a meet-record 2:19.49.

Junior Isabella Salafatinos was fourth in the 100 (13.37) and 200 (27.80) and led off the sixth-place 400 relay with junior Nicole Rogus, Michel and Emma Gambol (52.77).

In long jump, Emma Gambol pulled out a tiebreaker for third with LT junior Jamie Osborne. Senior Rachel Aubrey was sixth in triple jump (32-6 3/4).

The 800 relay (Rogus, Michel, senior Ali Burelbach, Emma Gambol in 1:51.18) and 1,600 relay (Rogus, junior Emma Winans, junior Sharon Murray, junior Ellen Daniels in 4:14.52) were fifth.

Winans, Daniela senior Mary Nevins return from last year's 1,600 relay state lineup. Nevins, who saw limited competition indoors, was sixth in the 400 (1:02.47).

Frosh-soph level

Freshman, Emma Hanson was anxious to return to the 100-meter high hurdles in her first outdoor girls track and field season for Glenbard West.

That excitement turned into a little bit of tension during Downers Grove South's Mustang Invitational Saturday, April 11. Hanson's preliminary time was the fastest going into the eight-hurdler finals.

"I think so, but it was good, positive pressure (to win)," Hanson said.

By thousandths of one second, Hanson came through in the finals in 18.74 seconds fully automatic time to earn one of five individual victories for the Hilltoppers en route to their second-place team finish.

Sophomore Melina Thurmond swept the shot put (33 feet-1 inch) and discus (92-0) for the first time at a major meet. Also winning were freshmen Mary Kate Shaver (3,200 in 12:15.28) and Maddie Schrauth (300 low hurdles in 50.31).

The Hilltoppers (112.5) only were beaten by Lyons Township (125), the indoor conference champions. Downers South (99) were third, followed by Hinsdale Central (56.5), Loyola Academy (48), Geneva (46), Glenbard North (38) and Bartlett (33), which did not compete on the varsity level.

Hanson also was second in the 300 hurdles (50.31) and shared fifth in long jump with sophomore Sophie Cvengros (13-11 1/2).

Also taking second were freshman MaryBeth Feeley (200 in 28.83), Cvengros (400 in 1:03.60), and the 3,200 relay of sophomore Jenna Kelly, freshmen Marika Tammaru and Ella Crowley and sophomore Olivia Rosley (10:40.89) and the 1,600 relay of Cvengros, freshman Catherine Reedy, Kelly and Schrauth (4:25.86).

In the 100 hurdles final, Hanson and LT sophomore Maryna Hoskins (18.74) were tied in hundredths of seconds but Hanson prevailed when their times were

extended to thousandths.

During prelims, Hanson won her heat in a prelim-best 18:31 with Hoskins second in 18.75. The top three finishers in two heats advanced to finals along with the next two fastest remaining times.

"I had the first seed for finals and then finals was a lot closer than I was expecting. It taught me that I can't always rely on the times," Hanson said. "Both (races) I had things that I noticed I have to improve on and both had aspects that (hurdles and head coach Kelly Hass) noticed that I can improve on. That's my main goal right now, to fix specific things. As I get better at that, then I can focus more on my time goal."

The longer hurdles races outdoors play to Hanson's advantage. The only indoors hurdles race is usually 55 meters (50 at Glenbard West) while the 300 hurdles are added outside over 400-meter tracks.

"It takes me a while to get into (the hurdles) usually. The first hurdle I'm a little clumsy and then I get into a rhythm and it's easier," Hanson said. "I had a chance to run the 100 hurdles in middle school (at Hadley) so at least I've had the experience before. I definitely liked running (50 to 60 hurdles) indoors because it gave me the chance to focus on my form. Now I can focus on my pace so that's good."

Schrauth's hurdles victory also was somewhat of a surprise because she only had competed the event once before in the outdoor season opener Wednesday, April 8, at Duchon Field, a non-scored dual meet with Lyons Township.

"I didn't know at first (about winning Saturday). I was like, 'OK, whatever happens, happens.' I wouldn't really care if I did something else, but I'm really happy that I won," Schrauth said.

Schrauth won by nearly four seconds over Hanson, who pulled out second by .44. On Wednesday, Schrauth ran 51.5 manual time, which was the fastest performance at the dual.

"I felt better than the first time I ever ran it because the first time was the first time and I didn't really know what I was doing," Schrauth said. "The second time, I felt like I had more practice and I feel like I did really well in the second race. I felt really confident."

Shaver also proved that seeds don't matter on the track. In her case, Shaver's 12:46.9 put her as the No. 2 seed in the 3,200 to Downers South freshman Alysa Taglia (12:39.0).

Shaver actually was coming off running a fifth-place 12:33.10 at the indoor conference March 20.

"(Saturday's race) was probably very surprising for people who were just spectating and looking at their heat sheets," Shaver said. "I think it worked to my advantage because I don't think the lead girl was really expecting me to be competition. That was kind of fun, too, just surprising everyone."

Never mind Shaver's seed – or even previous PR. When it came time to compete, Shaver beat her previous best by an amazing 18 seconds (12:15.28) and won by nearly 14 seconds.

Second-place LT freshman Kirsten Meyer (12:29.11), who had no seed time, stayed with Shaver until she began her kick sooner than usual. Shaver's final 800 was 2:59.1 and her final lap 1:25.2.

"It was really surprising. I looked at the clock and I almost convinced myself that I had another lap to go and then I was like, 'No. I can't be going that slow.' So I was really excited," Shaver said.

"That was really fun. I went out feeling really tired at first when I was warming up. I wasn't very confident. After my first 800 (2:58.2), I felt really good so I decided just to pass the lead pack because I wanted to see if I could keep the pace I was going. It was one of the first races where I didn't completely hurt or my legs were

tired. It was just the best two-mile I've ever run so it was great."

Shaver received more good news after her victory. She learned that older sister Abby, a junior, also won the frosh-soph 3,200 at the invite last year in 12:40.76.

"She told me that after. I'm like, 'coincidence,' " Shaver said. "She was very excited for that. She's like, 'Just keeping our name going for that frosh-soph 3,200.' "

"That was fun. I was kind of cooling down so I got to see most of it on the infield," Abby Shaver added. "It was really awesome to watch her do that. And she had a huge PR, like 18 seconds or something. That was insane."

Thurmond went into her events confident. She was the No. 1 seed for both and she was coming off throwing lifetime bests in both shot (35-0) and discus (97-8) Wednesday.

The indoor conference shot champion won that event by 3-9 as the only competitor to exceed 30 feet. Discus was much closer – only 1-2 ahead of Glenbard North freshman Jasmine Stokes (90-10).

"(The invite) wasn't as much pressure as conference because it was an invite and that's a special thing to go to. It wasn't, 'OK. This is now or never,' " Thurmond said.

"This was more like, 'OK. I know I'm first seed. Some of them were pretty close but I still had a pretty good advantage on a lot of them so I just felt blessed that I was able to get first place in both events."

The great distances Wednesday were a bit surprising because the weather was so cold, especially with the shot and discus throwing areas just south of Lake Ellyn with no protection from the elements.

Unlike recent years at the Downers South Invite, Saturday's conditions were warm with minimal wind.

"It felt really good," Thurmond said. "It's always nice to have no wind when you're throwing discus. There was a little wind, but it wasn't that bad. It was nice weather, perfect weather for shot."

In the 200 final, Feeley (28.83) was second to LT freshman Tara Schwarz (28.18) after earlier taking fifth in the 100 final (14.03). Freshman Micah Love was sixth in the 200 final (29.28).

Cvengros was second in the 400 (1:03.60) to Bartlett sophomore Kristen Leever (1:02.35) and 1.61 seconds ahead of third place.

Schwarz and Leever would have finished fifth and sixth in the respective varsity finals.

The 1,600 relay (4:25.86) was 1.43 seconds behind LT and the 3,200 relay (12:40.89) was 12.66 seconds behind Loyola. The 400 relay with Feeley, Love, Hanson and Schrauth was fourth (55.42).

Crowley was third in the 1,600 (5:45.66), 4.76 seconds from first place. Reedy was fourth in the 400 (1:06.21), fifth in triple jump (30-2 1/2) and tied for sixth in high jump (4-4).

-- by Bill Stone