

Another year of track experience is taking Glenbard West sophomore Emma Gambol to new levels.

Her first year with pre-season training also is paying big dividends.

“Last year, I came into the season not really prepared at all and I hadn’t run before in preseason,” Gambol said. “This year, I started running probably a month before the season started so I had a little bit of a base and I feel like that really helps.”

An improved Gambol showed her strength at the Proviso West Invitational Saturday, March 2. She won the 300-meter dash (41.9) and the 200 (26.8) anchored the second-place 1,600 relay (4:15.6) and took third in triple jump (34-2 3/4).

So did the Hilltoppers. They won seven events and captured the six-team invite title with 129 points, nine ahead of second-place Naperville Central. The sophomores (120.5 points) finished second to East St. Louis Senior (145).

“I think it’s pretty good for the team, especially because there are a lot of fast girls here so it was a good accomplishment for us,” Gambol said.

“I knew that it was going to be more competitive so I don’t know (if that pushed me). I was here last year and it was pretty tough for me. (Experience has helped) to know what the track feels like. I like the fact that it’s a bigger track so I was excited for that part of it. It kind of encouraged me.”

The Hilltoppers set four invite records, three on the varsity level. Junior Madeline Perez broke her own records from 2012 in sweeping the 3,200

(10:41.1) and the 1,600 (5:06.9), and senior Emma Reifel won the 800 in a record 2:16.5. Sophomore Megan Ozog broke the sophomore-level record in the 1,600 with a victorious 5:33.2.

Other varsity champions for Glenbard West were sophomore Mary Nivens (200 in 26.8) and the 3,200 relay (freshman Caitlyn Reick, Reifel, freshmen Christina Sedall and Grace Rogers in 9:46.8). It was the first time this season the Hilltoppers competed on a 200-meter track as opposed to 160 meters at home twice and at Downers Grove North Feb. 16.

“I’m tripping over myself trying to figure out who did the best. They all did their best,” Glenbard West head coach Kelly Hass said. “It’s unbelievable what these kids are doing right now, a little earlier than we expected. I’m thrilled and impressed with the whole group.”

Gambol dominated the 300 by 1.8 seconds, missing the invite record by .9, and pulled out the 200 by .2.

Perez led a great day for the distance runners by breaking her 2012 invite records by a blistering 14.8 seconds in the 3,200 and 5.6 seconds in the 1,600. In her first time running both events in the same meet this season, Perez just missed her season-best times of 10:39.1 in the 3,200 and 5:00.2 in the 1,600.

“The 3,200 was OK. I set a little bit higher goal for myself in that one, but I was happy with how I doubled overall. I felt pretty strong in the 1,600 so that went well,” Perez said. “I was just hoping to maybe finish a little bit better in my 3,200. In my 1,600, I was just kind of going into it thinking, ‘OK, I’ll run as fast as my legs will take me after running a 3,200, but overall it went well.’”

With a strong double by sophomore Lisa Luczak, the Hilltoppers went 1-2 in the 3,200 with Perez and Luczak (11:24.0) and 1-2-3 in the 1,600 for the third year in a row with Perez, Luczak (5:25.8) and Reick (5:31.9).

Perez ran the first 800 of her 1,600 in 2:31. In her 3,200 victory, Perez finished just two seconds slower than her time at Downers North. She took the first 400 meters in a slower 75.8 seconds but had the same 1,600 split of 5:07.

“I was hoping to kind of control myself a little bit more going out (for the 3,200). It worked,” Perez said. “Every race I kind of just want to test a little bit, something new, see what works, what doesn’t. I think I’m still finding that.”

Luczak also doubled for the first time this season in her first races since the Feb. 9 season opener. She has been battling the flu and pneumonia but had no apprehension about tackling both races in her return to action.

“I wasn’t even sure if I would be able to run in this meet and then finally, when I was told that I would, I was like, ‘Yes, to finally run again after two weeks,’ ” Luczak said.

“For me they’re my two favorite races and I didn’t want to seem like sickness would hold me back from doing something that I thought I could do. I love doing them both after each other because the one-mile is like, ‘Oh my gosh. This is only half of the two mile. It’s nothing. It’s my cool down so that’s why I love it so much.’ A lot of people don’t like it as much as I do but I find it fun (running both).”

Reifel dominated the 800 and broke the invite record from 2007 by .5

despite winning by 9.3 seconds. Reifel also ran team-best splits for the 3,200 relay (2:16.0) and the first leg of the 1,600 relay (1:00.5) with Nevins, Rachel Farley and Gambol.

“I was going after (the 800 record) for sure. I definitely thought it was possible,” Reifel said. “We had school off Friday, which is nice so I was able to get a lot of rest. Overall, I just felt good and it was exciting to go out there and pop a good time.”

The 3,200 relay won by 1.7 seconds over Naperville Central. Reifel helped the Hilltoppers take control on the second leg after Reick ran a personal-best 2:28.4 in her third time competing on the opening leg.

In her last 3,200 relay Feb. 16, Reick’s split was 2:32.1.

“The first couple of times were just hard to figure out pacing and what you should go at. This time I kind of knew and felt a little comfortable,” Reick said.

“We (freshmen) were really nervous going in, but we had a lot of confidence because we had Emma and we love her. It’s just nice having her there, showing us, ‘OK, this is how you should do it and you can do it.’ It kind of boosted our confidence a little bit.”

Rogers had a 2:28.9 anchor split and Sedall ran 2:33.4. Coming back later to run the open 800 with Reifel, Rogers (2:32.8) and Sedall (2:34.1) were fifth and sixth.

“The cool thing about that (3,200) relay is the other three girls are all freshmen. I think it’s so cool to see really in time how much they’ll develop,”

Reifel said. "They're new runners but they're also really strong and they're just smart girls and coming from cross country. They know how to pace themselves really well."

Nevins' 1:02.3 won the 400 by 1.6 seconds and followed that with a 1:03.8 split on the 1,600 relay.

"That (1:02.3) was just a shock. We knew it would happen sometime but not this weekend," Hass said.

Grace Walker tied for second in high jump by clearing a season-best 5 feet and was sixth in long jump (14-3). Madelyn O'Gorman was fourth in high jump (4-10).

Walker has consistently cleared 5-0 since her freshman year but has been battling a hip injury. She cleared 5-0 on her third and final attempt after knocking down the bar with her hand.

"It feels really good to come out here and just get right back up there after a few meets that were a little bit lower," Walker said. "Five feet is always a good marker to get over. It feels really good to get it a few weeks before conference so I can really bring it."

Senior Cynthia Mote also had a strong meet by taking fifth in triple jump (30-6 1/4) and sixth in the 55 hurdles (10.6) after a 10.5 in the prelims. Erin Spiech also reached the 55 hurdles finals and was eighth.

The 800 relay (Grace Lupo, O'Gorman, Chloe Powell, Elizabeth Ficarella in 2:01.9) was fifth. Jasharra Clark was sixth in the 55 (8.0) and 200 (28.1), and Cati Faber took sixth in her first time competing in pole vault (6-0).

Hass called Mote's 55 hurdles races the best she's ever seen in the 55 hurdles. In her only other previous meet running the 55 hurdles Feb. 16, Mote finished in 11.1

"It felt good. It was awesome to place. I was very excited about that," Mote said. "I definitely felt like my timing was on. The hurdles is such a weird race. Yes, it's about speed but there's a mental timing. In my head, I can hear it so it was really nice to just get that rhythm back. Now it's just speeding up that rhythm."

Freshman Erin Daniels was among those who had a busy but successful invite on the sophomore level.

Daniels was second in the 300 (46.4) and third in the 400 (1:07.4) and led off the second-place 1,600 relay with Sharon Murray, Nicole Rogus and Morgan McEnroe (4:35.7).

It was first time that Daniels competed in three events in a meet. She usually only competes in the 300 and 400, but she still managed a team-best 1:08.2 split in the 1,600 relay on the first leg.

"At the end, I kind of died out a little bit, but it was good, though," Daniels said. "It was a good meet. I think that I was just going event to event so I was not really thinking about how it was going to be hard doing all three events. I just thought, 'I have to do as hard as I can in this race and then the next race I'll do as best as I can.' "

Daniels competed in track at Hadley Junior High but got a late start this season after playing girls basketball. She dropped 1.2 seconds from her 300

time the previous meet.

“I have never really run the 300 before because it’s only an indoor race so I was happy with myself,” Daniels said.

Ozog broke the 1,600 invite record from 2007 by 3.3 seconds in winning by 14.9 seconds. Maddy Burt was third (5:52.3).

Earlier in the 3,200 relay, Ozog, Abby Shaver, Abby Moody and Burt were second (10:34.7) to Fremd’s 10:31.5.

Jessica Michel was second in the 200 (29.0) and sixth in the 55 (8.0) and anchored the second-place 800 relay with Hannah Paterakis, Murray and Shay Kiker (1:59.6).

Shaver was second in the 800 (2:37.6) with Julia Kochert sixth (2:45.1). Amani Bader was second in triple jump (29-8 1/4) and fourth in long jump (13-3 1/2).

Taking third were Bekah Dau (25-1 in shot put), Madeleine Winter (4-4 in high jump), Hannah Arduino (3,200 in 13:14.2) and Jessica Johanson in her pole vault debut (6-0).

Dau and fifth-place Katie Goleash (22-10) improved their season bests by 1-4 1/2 and 1-1/2, respectively.

“I didn’t see (the 25-1) coming,” Dau said. “In (the last) meet, I scratched a 26. It makes you push yourself harder, knowing that you can do it. You want to do better.”

Dau is following her older sisters, Sarah and Rachel, who also were throwers for the Hilltoppers. Sarah, a 2011 graduate, actually was listed in the Proviso West Invite results. Still, Bekah is starting from scratch since she attended St. Matthew School in Glendale Heights, where there was no track team.

“I watched (Sarah and Rachel) do it so I knew what to expect, but doing it, it’s a lot different and it’s fun just being around everybody,” Dau said. “It’s interesting. It’s harder than it looks, doing the actual glide.”

The Hilltoppers finished 3-4-6 in the 3,200 with Arduino, Abigail Dibadj (13:49.2) and Macy Lemke (14:20.3). Deena Harboonzong (11.0 in 55 hurdles) and Kiker (13-3 in long jump) were fifth, Rachel Aubrey (28-1 1/4 in triple jump) was sixth and Colleen Luczak tied for sixth in high jump (4-0).

In the non-scored 400 relay for throwers, the Hilltoppers’ Emily Davies, Dau, Nina Fraticola and Goleash finished third (1:06.9).