

Glenbard West senior Abigail Shaver came up big in many ways at Peoria Notre Dame's Richard Spring Invitational Saturday, Sept. 19.

Long after the race, she helped senior Kathryn Kenwood locate her missing warmup top.

"I saved the day," Shaver joked.

During the race, Shaver was among personal-best or strong efforts on the annual state meet course to help the Hilltoppers easily capture the team title with 95 points.

Sophomore Lindsey Payne continued her torrid start by covering the 3.0-mile Detweiller Park course in 16:34.0 to win by 18.9 seconds over Peoria Notre Dame senior Maryjeanne Gilbert (16:52.9), the defending invite and Class 2A state champion.

Payne was fifth at last year's 3A state meet in 17:00.

"I just want to keep pushing myself and our team did really well, too," Payne said.

"I want to just keep giving everything I have in every race. That's my main goal, to give everything I have left out on the course."

Kenwood was 11th (17:39.4) and junior Janie Nabholz (26th, 18:09.5) and seniors Grace Rogers (27th, 18:10.4) and Abigail Shaver (31st, 18:14.9) rounded out the team's top-five finishers with a strong pack.

They and freshman Katie Hohe (42nd, 18:27.2) also earned medals for placing among the top 60, followed by sophomore Claire Kenwood (69th, 18:45.2), sophomore Marika Tammaru (76th, 18:49.4), senior Kate Dorsey (91st, 19:00.7) and freshman Chloe Connolly (103rd, 19:09.2). Teams were allowed as many as 10 entries in the varsity race.

"We're very happy with what they did, 1 through 10. They all had real nice races," Glenbard West coach Paul Hass said.

"Lindsey Payne, of course, just ran great, another smart race, I thought, and really moved well. We had a 35-second split on our 2 through 5. We were looking for that from everyone, to move throughout the race, and I think we did that pretty well and tried to pack it up."

This was the third straight invite that the Hilltoppers have won. The Hilltoppers entered this invite ranked No. 3 by DyeStat Illinois -- the highest ranked 3A team in the field.

They finished well ahead of second-place No. 13 Wheaton Warrenville South (176), No. 17 Oswego (187) and No. 6 Palatine (210), second in state last year by

three points from the third-place Hilltoppers.

"I think (our performance) just gives us more confidence," Shaver said. "I know earlier this year that we had the potential to do good things and tis just kind of reinforced that we're still strong and everybody's working together and everybody's improving. It was an awesome win."

At the invite in 2014, Shaver was excited to finish 52nd, good enough for top-60 medal honors. Saturday was an all-time personal record – 29 seconds faster than the 2014 invite (18:43.3) and essentially equal to her Detweiller time at the state meet as the team's No. 7 finisher (107th, 18:15).

Shaver helped the Hilltoppers to a 35-second split between their No. 2 and 5 finishers. And that was with Kathryn Kenwood leading that group by also running a personal best by six seconds.

"It was awesome. I was able to see them (the pack) for most of the race so that was always reassuring to have them in my sights and know that we were running together," Shaver said.

At last year's invite, Gilbert beat Glenbard West senior Lindsay Graham by nearly 19 seconds for the title (16:30.2 to 16:51.1). Graham, however, also was coming off running 16:42 two days earlier to set the course record on the Hilltoppers' Camera Park home course.

Graham went on to win the 2014 state title in 16:23. However, she is not running this season as she rehabilitates from injury. Gilbert won the 2A state title in 16:12.

Payne missed last year's invite to compete in a tournament for club soccer, something she is not doing this year. On Saturday, Payne ran a steady race and remained among the frontrunners before taking charge in the final mile.

Payne was fourth at one mile (5:32). St. Charles sophomore Audrey Ernst, going out fast as she had at the Lake Park Invitational Sept. 12, led in 5:25.

By the two-mile mark, Payne was a stride ahead of Ernst in 11:12 with Palatine senior Kelly O'Brien (11:15) just ahead of Gilbert (11:16) for third.

Soon afterward, Payne began opening a significant lead.

"I think it was kind of a combination of me picking up the pace and (Ernst) slowing down a little bit," Payne said of Saturday's race. "It was fun, though. She's such a great runner and competitor. She went out really hard though so I think she just lost a little energy."

Payne just missed her PR of 16:28.4 that won the Lake Park Invite and was within .7 of the course record. That day, Payne was 24.7 seconds ahead of the second-

place Ernst.

On Saturday, Ernst ended up third (16:56.5) as the only other sub-17:00 finisher. Fourth-place Stevenson sophomore Isabelle Sparreo ran 17:08.0, followed by Lake Zurich senior Caitlin Shepard (17:12.3) and O'Brien (17:14.3), who was third at state in 2014.

Detweiller is known for being a fast course, but Payne knew that recent rain and wind would affect her time. At the First to the Finish Invitational Sept. 12 at Detweiller, Naperville North senior Judy Pendergast won in 16:18.9 – the fastest non-state meet time by any girl on the course.

"I wasn't putting too much pressure on myself so I definitely wanted to be close by my PR, which I did," Payne said. "I pushed myself really hard, as much as I could. I worked my butt off so it was good. I just did my best, the best I could and there were so many good competitors. They pushed me a lot, too, so it was awesome."

Kenwood also had a PR and made a 19-second improvement from the 2014 invite (12th, 17:59.3) and seven-second drop for her 2014 state performance (48th, 17:46). Lane Tech junior Maggie Scholle (17:38.8) edged her by .6 for 10th place. "Last year I was (12th) so I wanted to beat that and run with the pack again and try to get closer to Lindsey," Kenwood said.

"You've got to love Peoria. You cannot. It's always fun to run the state course and I'm glad our whole team comes down because they all get the experience, too, even if they don't get it at state. I love the course. It's fast. It's fun."

Hohe and Connolly made their Detweiller debuts as varsity runners. For Hohe, it was a PR by 30 seconds.

"I probably would have said, 'No way (before the race).' I probably would have said more around 18:45 but when I saw the clock when I was finishing I was like, 'Wow, that's awesome.' I was just so happy," Hohe said.

"It was really cool. I could look up and I could see Abby Shaver and I've never been that close to her before so that was definitely really cool for me and it broke a lot of barriers."

Last year's 60th-place time was 18:50.4, but an 18:45 Saturday would have ended up just in front of 70th place. The 60th-place time improved to 18:39.8.

"I saw that (medals were) top 60 and I saw of the times online from last year and I'm like, 'OK. I can do that,' " Hohe said. "People were calling out places and I was in the top 50 and I was so excited because I really wanted an individual award

today.”

Nabholz simply wanted to run a solid race. She was battling illness at the Lake Park Invite but still competed. She was 13th overall and the Hilltoppers’ No. 5 finisher (18:24.5), one place behind Shaver, but also 11 seconds behind the 10th-place Rogers.

“Lindsey was really sick last week, too, and I feel like everyone just kind of got out of the sick stage. It felt good to be back running how I usually do,” Nabholz said.

“At the last meet, I didn’t even see (Rogers) because I was so far behind. It was good that I got to catch back up with her today. I was really proud (Saturday). We worked together really well and we stayed together as a pack most of the race. I think that helped us get first.”

Besides illness, Nabholz recently has battled foot pain from “running off balance,” but new orthotics appear to have helped. Her shin splints that have affected her in years past also have improved.

“The orthotics helped those a lot, too, but sometimes after a meet or hard workout I have to ice them for a while. But they’re better,” Nabholz said.