

After three individual state titles in cross country and track as a junior, Glenbard West senior Madeline Perez was flooded with interest from college coaches.

With so many options, so many great schools and programs, Perez quickly realized that the place where she made her first official visit was where she wanted to be.

Perez made a verbal commitment to attend Georgetown University (Washington, D.C.) over the weekend after helping the Hilltoppers capture their first girls cross country state championship Saturday at Peoria's Detweiller Park.

"There are a lot of things that I could go on forever (why I selected Georgetown)," Perez said. "The cohesiveness of the team is just what attracted me the most. The coaches were amazing, the girls were great and on top that it's an amazing university and that's just as important to me as the athletics."

Perez is considering majoring in biology and pre-medicine. She made the first of her maximum five official visits to Georgetown the final weekend of September, when the cross country team had no meet that Saturday. She took only two more official visits before opting to commit.

"I knew I had the two (official visits) left and I definitely told myself if I needed it, then I will (take them), but my heart kept going back to it and I knew that was the place to go to and trust I'm not going to find any place like that," Perez said.

Perez became Glenbard West's first girls cross country state champion at the 2012 Class 3A girls cross country state meet when she won in 16:02, an all-time girls record time at Detweiller. Perez was third Saturday (17:03) despite not competing until the conference meet Oct. 19 after working her way back from a calf injury.

In May, Perez won both the 3,200-meter run (10:22.29) and 1,600 (4:52.24) at

the Class 3A girls track state meet to help the Hilltoppers to third place as a team and the program's first state trophy.

The 2013 track season also saw Perez set all-time school records in both the 3,200 and 1,600 and set her break her previous school records in both events indoors and outdoors. Perez ran the all-time 1,600 school record of 4:52.21 in the state meet preliminaries and the all-time 3,200 school record of 10:21.19 at Wheaton Warrenville South's Tiger Invitational April 26.

The Georgetown women's cross country team is ranked No. 3 nationally this season and just finished second at the Big East Conference Championships Nov. 2 to No. 4 Providence. The women's track team was eighth at the Big East Championships in May.

While there were are no Illinois athletes on the current Georgetown women's cross country and track rosters, Perez has a local connection. Mike Lederhouse is a 2012 Glenbard West graduate and a member of the men's cross country and track teams. Lederhouse, a two-time track all-stater for the Hilltoppers in the 1,600, was sixth in the 1,500 (3:53.35) at the USA Track & Field Championships in June 19-23 in Des Moines, Iowa.

"I saw him on my visit and he's been super helpful to me, just in general with recruiting," Perez said. "If you find that place, you're really happy at, hopefully you won't get homesick. I've definitely found that place."