

Glenbard West sophomore Lindsey Payne's domination this girls cross country season actually has been coupled by a few close calls.

Thanks to another great finish Thursday, Sept. 24, the overall result finally went her way.

Payne ran a record time of 16:38 for 2.88 miles at the Hilltoppers' home course in Glendale Heights in their triangular meet victory over West Suburban Conference Silver Division foes York and Hinsdale Central.

"It's shocking for sure. I really didn't think I was going to get the record or anything so that was awesome," Payne said. "It was just really cool to see what I could do."

Payne broke the record of 16:42 set by current Glenbard West senior Lindsay Graham Sept. 18, 2014 in a home triangular with York and Oak Park-River Forest. Graham went on to win the Class 3A state title in 16:23 for 3.0 miles but is not competing this season as she rehabilitates from injury.

Before Graham, the record time was 16:53 set in 2011 by Madeline Perez, who went on to win the 2012 3A state title in a Detweiller course-record 16:02.

The Hilltoppers compete at Camera one last time this season as hosts of the Silver Meet Saturday, Oct. 17.

"It's definitely cool because I know there's been a lot of great runners that have been on this course, like Madeline Perez and Lindsay Graham, and even some people from other schools that have been really good," Payne said. "It was such a big accomplishment to say I got the best time ever. It was really cool for sure."

"It really says something when you have Madeline Perez and then that record is broken by Lindsay Graham and then by Lindsey Payne," Hass said. "That's pretty elite company. Those are three of the best runners in the history of the state. It's a credit to Lindsey's work ethic and her ability."

The Hilltoppers also had a great team effort, beating York 23-35 and Hinsdale Central 15-50.

Seniors Grace Rogers (18:06) and Abigail Shaver (18:16), junior Janie Nabholz (18:24), senior Kathryn Kenwood (18:25) and freshman Katie Hohe (18:29) finished fourth through eighth overall. Senior Kate Dorsey was 12 (19:25).

This year is the first in which the dual results do not factor into the final overall Silver standings. Hinsdale Central did not compete its regular varsity lineup.

"I felt like we ran really well. We won at all three levels. We ran together the whole race," Rogers said.

"I was not surprised (about Payne's record). I knew it was coming. She's been working so hard and she's been so close (to others). Of course, she probably sets goals for herself but she's not super focused on it. She's focused on running really well and then it came. I'm really proud of her."

In the Hilltoppers' first two invitationals, Payne took first place and just missed course records in both.

On Sept. 5, Payne won the Hornet-Red Devil Invite at Katherine Legge Memorial Park with a then personal-best 16:40.1 that just missed Graham's course-record 16:35 Oct. 9, 2014.

Payne's 16:28.4 to win the Lake Park Invite Sept. 12 was less than a second off the all-time course record.

Payne broke the Camera record minus the aid of a visible clock at the finish line. The last time she heard her time was on the back part of the course at 13:45 with about 1,000 meters remaining.

"I said, 'You've got to run basically under a 5:40 pace, but you have a shot at it.' And she ended up doing it, so certainly impressive," Hass said.

"I was like, 'Oh, OK, so I just kicked into gear,'" Payne said.

"I had no idea (I barely broke it). I just wanted to finish as hard as possible to make sure and just to know that I gave everything I had, even if I didn't get it."

Payne ended up winning by more than a minute over York senior Elizabeth Hagstrom (17:54.6) with York freshman Sarah May (18:02.8) third.

After one mile, Payne only led Hagstrom by one second (5:50 to 5:51) but was completely in charge when she crossed the two-mile mark in 11:39.

Payne continues to impress thanks to two major factors. She has another year of high-school cross country experience and has gained valuable racing knowledge and familiarity with the courses. She also is not playing club soccer this year, which expended energy and affected her training schedule.

Payne still finished fifth at the 2014 3A state meet (17:00) – and that was with having to stop in the early going and reattach her shoe after it was stepped on by another competitor.

"I think that kind of shows you what she did last year. She was playing two sports and did all of that. Now she's able to rest her body and improve that much more with recovery time," Hass said.

"The goal is to keep improving and hopefully she does it and I don't see anything that will indicate that she won't get better. Her work ethic is amazing and she

keeps on pushing herself every workout, and certainly in the meets she does.” Being undefeated so far and as the second highest state finisher competing this season, Payne is among the favorite for the individual state title.

Palatine senior Kelly O’Brien was the only active runner to beat Payne at state in 2014 (3rd, 16:55) and Payne finished ahead of her at the Hornet-Red Devil.

Naperville North senior Judy Pendergast, the 3,200-meter 3A state track champion in May, ran a blistering 16:18.9 at Detweiller Sept. 12 — the fastest non-state time ever.

“I don’t know. I don’t really like to think about (state) too much because I don’t want to put too much pressure on myself,” Payne said. “Obviously, that would be awesome (to win), but if not I’m OK with just giving everything I have.”