Sam Joens wins discus at Drake

Written by Jim Ecker
Friday, 29 April 2011 14:38 -

DES MOINES - Most of the guys who competed against Sam Joens in the discus Friday at the Drake Relays looked like heavyweight wrestlers or offensive linemen.

"Yeah, I noticed," said Joens, a slender fellow for this event at 6-foot-3 and 185 pounds.

The Cedar Rapids Prairie senior proved that sheer size isn't everything when it comes to tossing the discus a long way.

Joens uncorked a heave of 176 feet, 5 inches on his sixth and final throw to capture the title against all those brawny fellows on a sunny, breezy morning in Des Moines.

Joens was languishing in sixth place when he entered the ring for the final time in the 102nd Drake Relays. His best toss at that point was 163-8, more than 10 feet behind Michael Smithburg of Fairfield.
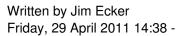
Joens leaned into his last throw and let it rip. Fans cheered while the discus was in the air, sensing a majestic and dramatic toss. Joens knew he nailed it.

"Yeah, I could tell," he said. "Some days you're not sure. This one here today, I knew. Once it left my hand it was gone."

Joens topped his previous personal best of 170-6 by nearly six feet.

Joens posed for pictures after winning the title, then received a series of hugs from friends and relatives. Without that final toss, he would have finished seventh.

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"I can't believe it. I still can't believe it," he said 15 minutes after winning the event. "It's incredible."

Smithburg placed second at 174 feet, 11 inches. Justin Baker of Sioux City Heelan, who leads the state rankings at 178, finished third at 165-7. Joens climbed into second place in the state with his 176-5, but he was No.1 at Drake.

"I feel great," said Joens, who will compete at the University of Iowa next year. "I just figured I'd give it all I had that last throw."

Joens displayed a real flair for the dramatic by saving his best for last.

"It's been like that all season. The last throw," he said. "I don't know how it works out like that."