

## Joens, Piche turn Metro into discus capital of Iowa

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - Sam Joens and Amanda Piche turned the discus events into a Metro celebration at the Class 4A state track meet Thursday.

Two events, two state champions, two wide margins of victory.

Joens, a senior at Cedar Rapids Prairie, uncorked the five best throws of the entire competition and won the state title with a heave of 184 feet, 6 inches.

Piche, a senior at Linn-Mar, won the girls title by more than eight feet with a mighty toss of 146 feet, 4 inches.

Joens was a monster. His five best throws of 184-6, 181-4, 180-4, 177-9 and 171-8 were all better than the 167-7 toss by Jacob Hayes of Bettendorf that took second place.

Joens actually finished 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th in the event if you judge by sheer distance.

"I can't complain about anything," said Joens, who will join the Big Ten champs at the University of Iowa next season. "I'm just happy the way it turned out."

Joens came close, but barely missed breaking the Prairie school record in the discus of 185-4. That was set by his father, Scott Joens, in 1982 and has stood for 29 years.

Throwing the discus - and throwing it a long way - is a proud tradition for the Joens family at Prairie. Sam is the 2011 Drake Relays and Class 4A state champion, his uncle Jason won the state title in 1989 and his father owns the school mark.

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So who's the family champion? "Sam is now," said Scott, smiling. "I didn't win at state."

Sam disagreed, claiming his father still has bragging rights. "He's still got the upper leg on me," Sam claimed. "He still has the record. He still threw it farther."

Sam thought he may have topped his father when his toss of 184-6 sailed into the breeze at Drake. "I thought I did," he said. "But how can you tell the difference between 184-6 and 185-4?"

Joens set personal bests on four of his throws. It began with a 177-9 Thursday and took the pressure off for the rest of the meet. "Yeah, you can just go out there and whip them and have no regrets," he said.

Piche had no regrets, either. She was in third place when she hit 146-4 on her next-to-last toss, leaving the competition battling for second place.

Piche had to wait until everyone else took their last throws, then broke into tears as she celebrated with her coaches, family members and teammates.

Why the tears?

"Just because I've been working for this since I've been in seventh grade when I started throwing. And I finally won it," she said. "Last year I had a disappointing year, and I feel like I've redeemed myself."

Her toss of 146-4 was a personal best.

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"I was kind of worrying a little before the finals that I wasn't going to hit one, but I did," said Piche, who will compete at DePaul University next season. "I was just really relieved that I could end the season on a high note.

"I have problems relaxing sometimes, so I just have to sit there and calm myself down. It may take a while, but eventually I do it."

Piche placed second at the Drake Relays this year at 137-9.

Katie Carver of Prairie placed fourth in the girls discus at 126-6 and Tydel Jones of Washington finished fifth at 121-1. Valerie Veiock of West Des Moines Valley was second at 138-0.