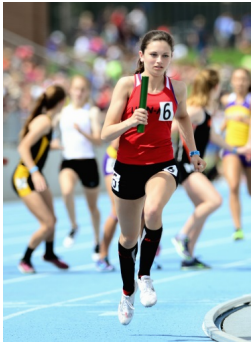


## Lions win medley, lead 4A standings

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 22 May 2015 20:33 - Last Updated Friday, 22 May 2015 20:49

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DES MOINES - Amber Decker has been collapsing after races ever since she began running for Linn-Mar High School as a freshman two years ago.

She collapsed -- and celebrated -- again Friday.

Decker ran the anchor leg as the Lions claimed the distance medley relay at the Class 4A state meet and stayed ahead of the pack in the race for the title.

Decker runs to the point of exhaustion, and sometimes beyond. She spent a few minutes bent over on the track at Drake Stadium on Friday after the medley, got to her feet, walked off the track and then reclined on her back on the field turf while her teammates hovered around.

She got up with a weary smile after awhile and joined the party with Ariana Rolle, Brooke Lorenz and Payton Wensel, her teammates on the medley.

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"It's all so worth it," Decker said after recovering. "They're great people to come out and do it with all of them. These people have so much talent. It's so great to be part of it."

Linn-Mar ended the second day of the state meet with 52 points for a 15-point lead over Pleasant Valley. The Lions collected valuable points Friday when Lannie Nietert placed second in the shot put (40-5 3/4), Rolle took third in the long jump (17-8 1/2) and Stephanie Jenks finished fifth in the 400 hurdles (1:05.39).

The Lions still have plenty of firepower for Saturday with Jenks and Decker in the 800, Jenks in the 1,500 and several relay teams. Decker will run again - probably to the point of exhaustion again - then pick herself up and thank her teammates.

"They push me every day, they support me in everything," she said. "Without them I wouldn't have the success that I do."

"To do it together is just so special. It's so great to be part of a team that has so much passion and love for the sport. I've just been blessed to be a part of it."

Decker has earned three gold medals at state track meets during her career. She helped the Lions win the 4x400 relay last year and anchored the 4x800 relay team to victory here Thursday before running the anchor leg on the distance medley Friday.

Decker will do anything for her team. Last fall, she competed in the district cross country meet in Marshalltown despite battling a case of bronchitis. It took her 10 minutes to recover after that race.

Decker has sometimes wondered if it's worth pushing herself to such extremes.

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"Of course," she said. "I go through periods where I have a little bit of a mental struggle sometimes, but I always find a way. I call them my support circle, my family and friends who are always there for me.

"They always support me and they get me back to what I love to do."

Decker was sporting a tattoo of a lion on the back of her left shoulder Friday, but it was only a temporary design and can be washed off. She does not plan to become a tattoo lady.

"We always do it for state. We kind of feel it's the intimidating factor," she said, joking. "Right now we just like to go out and have fun."

The Lions have had a lot of fun at the state meet so far. They could really have some fun Saturday if they win the overall state title.

In other results Friday, the Jefferson girls finished seventh in the distance medley with MiAsia Bergmann, Morgan Meese, Autumn Anderson and Meredith Koenigsfeld timed in 4:08.57.

Amara Taylor of Washington placed eighth in the 400 hurdles in 1:05.96.