

J-Hawks 4x200 relay 2nd at Drake

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - The 102nd [Drake Relays](#) brought out the best in Metro track athletes Friday.

Sam Joens of Cedar Rapids Prairie won the boys discus title ([see separate story](#)), but he had lots of company in the spotlight on a breezy, 70-degree day in Des Moines.

Caleb Mere of Cedar Rapids Kennedy finished a strong second in the boys long jump at 23 feet and set a school record in the process.

Will Griffin and Alex Carr of Cedar Rapids Washington officially tied for second place in the 100 meter dash, but Griffin was actually one-thousandth of a second faster than Carr.

Cedar Rapids Jefferson finished second in the girls 4x200 relay with Malya Rattliffe, Summer Carber, Taylor Jacobson and Rachel Broghammer passing the baton in style.

Matt Stocker of Cedar Rapids Prairie claimed third place in the 800 meter run in 1:57.08, giving the Metro area a solid showing on Day 2 of America's track classic.

Mere sailed 23 feet in the preliminaries to lead all qualifiers, but he's been fighting a hamstring injury and decided to skip all three of his jumps in the finals. Kenny Gilmore of Davenport Central went 23-5 3/4 in the finals to beat him.

Gilmore is the premier long jumper in the state, having reached 24-5 this season. Mere felt good about finishing second, only 5 3/4 inches behind Gilmore.

"It's pretty cool," Mere said. "I definitely know he's a great jumper. Being that close to him is really cool."

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Mere has recovered from a minor injury to his right hamstring, but his left hamstring is bothering him now. He passed on his final three jumps in the long jump to avoid further injury and to focus on the shuttle hurdle relay on Saturday.

Mere said his left hamstring felt "really good" during the long jump, but he elected to retire with his 23-foot effort in the books.

"It was my goal for the season," he said. "I nailed it this early (in the season), so it's pretty cool."

Mere finished third in the long jump at Drake last year at 21-9 3/4, and his personal best in the event was 22-2 before he sailed nearly a foot longer Friday. He thinks he can reach 23-6 or perhaps a little higher this year.

"Twenty-four (feet) seems like it would be really hard to get, but you never know," he said.

Griffin raced to the fastest time in the 100-meter prelims Friday morning in 11.07 seconds, but James Harrington of Cedar Falls blitzed the field with a 10.84 in the finals to grab his second straight title at Drake. Griffin and Carr tied for second in the official standings at 11.10 seconds, but the electronic clock showed Griffin in 11.091 and Carr in 11.092.

Harrington and Griffin are both juniors with many more races to come in the Mississippi Valley Conference, the Drake Relays and state meets in 2011 and 2012.

"Will will get it, if he sticks to his guns and keeps working hard," said Carr, a senior who will play football at the University of Northern Iowa.

Jefferson ran a strong race in the 4x200 relay, but the J-Hawks had to settle for second place behind a record-setting showing of 1:42.20 by Des Moines Roosevelt. Rattliffe, Carber, Jacobson and Broghammer finished 1.3 seconds later in 1:43.50.

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Stocker stuck his nose in the middle of a quick 800-meter run, which saw 12 runners break 2 minutes. Kyle Wheeler of Glenwood won the race in 1:55.82, matching the meet record.

The Metro had four other top-8 finishes Friday.

Kennedy placed fourth in the boys sprint medley in 3:32.87 with Josh Jahlas, Jed Haycraft, Jacob Losch and Anthony Crawley.

Washington finished sixth in the girls 4x200 relay in 1:45.11 with Jasmyne Jones, Kadejah Sanders, Taylor Vogel and Layloni Beard.

Prairie took seventh place in the boys sprint medley in 3:33.49 with Austin Dellamuth, Tom Frieden, Demetrius Harper and Matt Stocker.

Washington placed seventh in the boys 4x200 relay in 1:30.02 with Alonzo Carr, Kristopher Gardner, Griffin and Alex Carr.

Carter Valentine of Xavier qualified for the finals of the 110 hurdles in 15.10 seconds, but he was disqualified in the finals for a false start.