

Piche finishes a precarious 2nd at Drake Relays

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES -- Linn-Mar senior Amanda Piche lived dangerously at the 102nd Annual Drake Relays on Thursday.

She was almost disqualified for wearing the wrong number on her uniform (not her fault), then almost failed to qualify for the finals in the discus after winning the event here last year.

"I was kind of freaking out," she said.

The day had a mostly happy ending. Piche overcame the misadventures and finished second in the discus at 137 feet, 9 inches. That was better than her winning toss of 136-9 last year, but not good enough to beat Dakotah Goodell of Williamsburg (140-0).

"I'm a little disappointed, because I won last year," Piche said, "but I'm really excited that I actually made it to the finals. Because, wow, I did terrible in the first round of throws."

Piche threw 112 feet, 8 inches on her first toss, then was stopped before she could return to the ring for her second throw. One of the Drake Relays officials noticed she was wearing entry No. 4184 on her uniform when she was supposed to be No. 4186.

Somehow, Piche and Linn-Mar distance runner Carolyn Newhouse mistakenly had each other's number and for a while it looked like they wouldn't let Piche take her second throw.

"I don't know how they got mixed up," Piche said. "When they (Linn-Mar's coaches) gave them out to us they thought it was the right number. I guess it must not have been right in the packet or something."

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After a short delay, a Drake official told Piche she could take her second throw and they'd resolve the problem later. Piche promptly had her worst throw of the day and deliberately scratched by stepping out of the front of the ring.

"It kind of broke my concentration," she said. "I was a little worried that I was going to be DQ'd, and so I was kind of freaking out in my mind, and then I wasn't really focused on the throw.

"I was focused on the number, so that kind of threw me off a little. It was like a hundred feet. I didn't know what was happening."

This all happened at approximately 4 p.m., and by coincidence Newhouse was scheduled to compete in the 3000 meter run at 4:10 p.m. Newhouse had No. 4186, but was supposed to be No. 4184 and risked being disqualified as well.

Fortunately for Linn-Mar, the discus facility at Drake is near the track, where Newhouse was getting ready for her race.

"Our distance coach ran over, got her number and got my number and switched them," Piche explained. "Yeah, I was a little worried. I was a little flustered."

Linn-Mar Coach Craig Pilcher identified Kim Kuda as the distance coach who saved the day.

Piche regained her composure and had a toss of 126 feet, 5 inches on her third and final throw in the prelims to qualify for the finals. Only eight of 24 contestants made the finals, and Piche advanced with the seventh-best toss.

Given a fresh start, she uncorked throws of 137-9, 137-2 and 128-4 in the finals to finish in second place by 10 inches.

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"I'm really happy I made runnerup," she said. "I came from the bowels of the competition and made it to second place, so I'm really happy about that."

Newhouse wasn't so fortunate in her event. She battled for third place during the first part of the 3000 meter run, but faded and finished ninth in 10:28.77. Shelby Houlihan of Sioux City East won the race in 9:56.71.

Xavier junior Alec Clasen tied for eighth in the boys high jump at 6 feet, 4 inches. Jordan Cress of Olin won the event at 6 feet, 8 inches.

Cedar Rapids Prairie senior Kyle Stocker finished 10th in the boys 3200 meter run in 9:36.79. Kevin Lewis of Ottumwa won the race and set a meet record in 9:05.58.

Cedar Rapids Washington junior Callie Stone finished 22nd in the girls long jump at 15 feet, 2 3/4 inches. Alex Gochenour of Logan-Magnolia won the long jump at 18-2.

The Drake Relays continue Friday and Saturday.