

Lions smack Drake record in medley

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - The Linn-Mar Lions have fallen in love with the sprint medley at Drake.

The Lions captured the event for the second straight year Friday and broke the Drake Relays record in 3:26.89, snapping the old mark of 3:27.18 set by Iowa City High in 2004.

Linn-Mar had three different runners on the relay this year, but Josh Evans was the still the anchorman. And still the man.

Evans got the baton after a swift leg by freshman Dalton Gosch and ticked off a sizzling 1 minute, 51 second split in the 800 to win the race with a strong kick.

"That's awesome," Evans said of his 1:51 split. "This was way faster than I figured I'd go."

Tristan Freese and Daniel Gorsich ran the opening 200 legs for the Lions. Gorsich passed the baton to Gosch in fifth place, but the freshman blazed around the Blue Oval with an impressive 400.

"Freaking fast," was how Evans described Gosch's leg. "It was awesome."

Evans wasn't too bad himself. A day after nearly cracking 9 minutes in the 3200 and finishing

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second, he came back and felt good.

"Surprisingly, not sore," he said. "I felt pretty fresh."

Dowling Catholic finished second in the medley in 3:28.08, more than a second behind Linn-Mar.

Gosch was a happy ninth grader after helping the Lions defend their title in the sprint medley.

"I'm just excited," he said. "This is my first win at Drake, in my first race at Drake. It feels really good. I'm just proud of my whole team."

It was picture-perfect day in Des Moines, with the temperature climbing into the mid-70's under bright sunshine, a welcome relief from the previous day and most of the spring.



A veteran Drake Relays official told Evans it was the best Friday weather at Drake in 40 years.

"We knew it was going to be a pretty special morning," said Evans. "It was a stacked field and I figured it would be pretty fast."

Evans battled Dowling sophomore Ryan Schweizer on the last lap. It wasn't easy, but the Linn-Mar senior got it done.

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"He almost lost me a couple of times on that last lap," said Evans. "I just tried to run as hard as I could and that's what I did."

Evans won the gold medal in the 1600 at Drake last year and will try to defend his title Saturday. In the meantime, he reveled in winning a gold medal with his teammates.

"This was the best feeling," he said. "It's the coolest feeling in the world. It's so much fun when you help your team win."

Evans has broken three records at the Drake Relays during his career. He set a new standard in the 1600 last year when he won in 4:10.86, and he surpassed the former record in the 3200 Thursday when he placed second in 9:01.55. Now he has a piece of the record in the sprint medley with his pals.

Speaking of records, Linn-Mar sophomore Stephanie Jenks put on another strong performance Friday after setting a state record in the 3000 on Thursday in 9:26.87.

Jenks finished second in the 800 Friday in 2:11.65 with a strong finish after being stuck behind a pack of runners on the first lap. Kaley Ciluffo of Pleasant Valley won the race in 2:10.23.

Jenks will be aiming to defend her Drake title in the 1500 Saturday.