

Wensel shines at Dickinson Relays

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 07 March 2016 20:26 - Last Updated Monday, 07 March 2016 22:11



CEDAR FALLS - Linn-Mar sophomore Payton Wensel is obsessed with breaking the Class 4A state record in the 400 meter dash this spring.

In fact, she's got that record time imprinted on her brain.

"55.41," she said Monday, rapidly ticking off the numbers. "It's the password on my computer."

She's definitely headed in the right direction.

Wensel captured the 400 meter dash in 56.73 seconds at the annual Dickinson Relays Monday in the UNI-Dome, an unusually swift time for an indoor meet on a flat 200-meter track in March.

She'll be aiming for that 55.41 sometime this spring, perhaps at the Class 4A state meet on the famed Blue Oval at Drake Stadium in Des Moines.

Ellen Dougherty of Sioux City East set that meet record in 2009 and Wensel types those numbers by memory every time she logs onto her personal computer. "It's definitely in my sights," she said.

Wensel won the Class 4A state title in the 400 last year as a freshman in 55.96, putting her well within reach of the 55.41.

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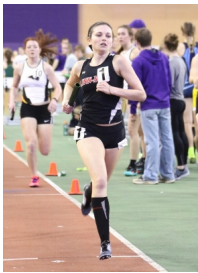
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Wensel also would like to make a run at the Iowa all-time best of 53.96 seconds, set by Hannah Willms of Dike-New Hartford in 2010, although probably not this year.

"I'm looking for it," she confirmed. "I'm not sure if it will happen or not, but I'm definitely going to try."

Wensel has long legs and a long stride, ideal for a quarter-miler. She also has a fierce desire to excel.

"Tenacity," said Linn-Mar Coach Nathan Hopp. "She's just a tenacious competitor."



"She has a very strong work ethic. She's one of those kids, she refuses to lose."

"She's willing to make the sacrifices to be the best," he said. "She's worked a long time at perfecting her craft, and she's only going to get better."

Hopp wasn't sure he wanted to enter Wensel in the 400 on Monday. It's a long season and there was little to prove at the Dickinson Relays, but Wensel knew that Boone star Dianna Slight would be entered in the race and she craved a chance to compete against her.

Joy Ripslinger, a state 800 meter champion from Davenport Assumption, was also in the 400 Monday, making for a strong field.

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"I'm not going to lie, I was terrified," Wensel said. "Dianna had been one of the people who beat me last year at this meet and I was determined not to let that happen again.

"I was thinking about her the whole training season. She was my motivation. I felt coming out here and being able to compete as well as I did was phenomenal."

Slight placed second in 57.10 seconds and Ripslinger was third.

Wensel also helped Linn-Mar win the 4x800 meter relay Monday with Morgan Garcia, Hanna Saville and Amber Decker.

The Lions also grabbed the 4x400 relay in 4:02.75 with Brooke Lorenz, Decker, Saville and Wensel.

The Jefferson J-Hawks finished second in the 4x200 relay behind Davenport Assumption. Linn-Mar placed third in the race. The J-Hawks also placed second in the 4x800 relay behind Linn-Mar.

Brooke Lorenz of Linn-Mar finished third in the long jump at 16 feet, 10 inches. Arianna Rolle of Linn-Mar finished fourth at 16-9 1/2.

Megan Renner of Linn-Mar finished fourth in the high jump at 5 feet, 2 inches. She matched the second-best effort, but placed fourth on the tiebreakers.

DICKINSON RELAYS WINNERS

High jump - Marissa Ward, Iowa Valley, 5-3

Long jump - Aleenah Marcucci, Northeast, 17-9 3/4

Shot put - Kiana Phelps, Kingsley-Pierson, 47-2 1/2

3000 - Jessica McKee, Johnston, 10:30.25

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4x200 relay - Davenport Assumption 1:45.87

4x800 relay - Linn-Mar 9:36.50 (Morgan Garcia, Payton Wensel, Hanna Saville, Amber Decker)

1500 - Ellie Friesen, Osage, 4:55.37

400 - Payton Wensel, Linn-Mar, 56.73

60 hurdles - Valerie Welch, Iowa City West, 9.20

60 dash - Kerris Roberts, Waterloo East, 7.66

200 - Sydney Milani, Southeast Polk, 25.92

800 - Lily Campbell, Waukee, 2:22.42

4x400 relay - Linn-Mar 4:02.75 (Brooke Lorenz, Amber Decker, Hanna Saville, Payton Wensel)