

Lancaster's Kurzdorfer fortifies her title collection

By Miguel Rodriguez - SPECIAL TO THE NEWS
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Nichols' Adele Jackson-Gibson took second in the Federation 100 meters
Photo by James P McCoy / Buffalo News

If winning one state championship is cause for celebration, what does one do when she's won four titles over the course of two days?

How about a party with a close circle of friends. That's how Melissa Kurzdorfer marked her triumphant weekend at the New York State Track and Field Championships, and why not?

The Lancaster sophomore finally won the state public schools shot put title that had been missing from her collection of gold medals. Kurzdorfer then defended her Federation (overall state) championships in the shot and discus Saturday afternoon before an estimated 2,000 at UB Stadium, as she is believed to be the first Section VI female thrower to sweep the state and Federation titles. Kurzdorfer won the state title in the discus Friday.

"For the past two years I've been trying to do this. I finally got it, it's time to celebrate," said Kurzdorfer, whose good friend Erin Miller of Lockport hosted a post-meet dinner gathering for throwers from various schools in Section VI with a menu that included ribs and stromboli. "It's happiness and relief. That's the best way to put it."

Kurzdorfer wasn't the only Western New York female to capture a Federation title as eighth-grader Kala Allen of Williamsville East capped an impressive weekend by winning the 400 meters in record-setting fashion, again. After winning the state crown in a Section VI record 55.61 seconds Friday, she captured the race that included the private and New York City schools' athletes in 55.24 to edge Janet Mellor of Section XI's Mount Sinai by 0.11 seconds.

So what's the secret of Allen's success? Apparently she likes running scared, as being nervous against quality competition causes her to motor.

"I expected to come in second," said a surprised Allen after her triumphant weekend in which she rose to the top after entering the meet as a No. 12 seed. "I was kind of doubting myself. I just underestimated myself. . . . It's great. I'm really excited for the next four years."

In the public schools portion of the meet that wrapped up Saturday morning, Kurzdorfer won the state title in the shot with a throw of 46 feet, 4z inches. She took second at last year's meet while battling a sinus infection and had to withdraw from the event two years ago due to a back injury.

But the power of positive thinking proved to be a beautiful thing for Kurzdorfer, who won the Federation shot put with a throw of 44-6 and Fed discus with a heave of 141-10.

"All it takes is focus and confidence is key because if you have confidence and you know you're going to do it then there's no doubt you're going to do it," Kurzdorfer said.

Section VI's three throwers in the championships combined to win 12 medals, which are awarded to the top eight finishers. Miller finished fourth in state and Federation shot put competitions and fifth and sixth in the discus in her first state meet. Cleveland Hill's Taylor Eldridge also won four medals, including Friday's Division II state title in the discus.

Soccer standout Adele Jackson- Gibson just missed joining Kurzdorfer and Allen as Federation champions. The Nichols junior finished second in the 100, getting edged by Sasha Richards of Section I's Mount Vernon by a tenth of a second. But Jackson-Gibson, a three-time Monsignor Martin and two-time state Catholic champion, wasn't disappointed.

"I was eighth last year so it's a big step," said Jackson-Gibson, who finished sixth in the long jump. "Coming from a school with no track program, it's pretty incredible."

Williamsville South's Allie VanBuren finished second in the state in both the 100 and 400 hurdles, but the sophomore saved her best run for the Federation 400 hurdles when she broke the Section VI record of her friend and former state champion Fawn Dorr by 0.1 seconds. VanBuren finished third in 1:00.7.

East Aurora's 4x800 relay crew of Jenna Hulton, Kirsten Weberg (fourth in the steeplechase), Erin Crawford and Erin Holbrook took second in Division II in a season-best 9:30.02. Hulton also finished third in the 1,500 in a personal-best 4:40.58.

North Tonawanda's Jackie Burns ran a 2:12.87 in the 800, dropping her school record by more than two seconds in placing sixth in the Federation.