

Jenks snaps state record in 3000 at Drake

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - Stephanie Jenks idolized Katie Flood when she was younger and dreamed about becoming as good as the former Dowling star some day.

Now she's better. Now she's the all-time best in Iowa.

Jenks broke Flood's record in the 3000 meter run Thursday when she captured the race at the Drake Relays on a grey, blustery day in Des Moines.

Jenks set the new standard at 9 minutes, 26.87 seconds as she blew away the competition and topped Flood's old mark of 9:27.25 set as a high school senior in 2010.

"She was my idol when I was little," said Jenks, a sophomore at Linn-Mar. "I always heard about Katie Flood. It kind of made me work harder to get there."

By coincidence, Flood is competing at the Drake Relays this year as a senior at the University of Washington, where she's won an NCAA title in the 1500.

"I decided it would mean more to me and more to her if I broke it when she was here in town," said Jenks.

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Jenks is six years younger than Flood, but they competed against each other in an open cross country race in Oregon last October. Jenks gave her idol a good race, finishing just three seconds behind Flood despite their difference in age.

"I've never actually met her," said Jenks. "Actually I said 'hi' to her once, but I don't think she knew who I was."

Flood held the old record in the 3000 at the Drake Relays of 9:43.39, as well as the old state mark of 9:27.25. Now her name has been erased and Jenks has taken her place.

Jenks grabbed the lead right from the start Thursday. First it was 10 meters, then 50 meters, then 100 meters, then 150 meters as she left everyone quickly behind. Rebekah Topham of Griswold ended up finishing second in 10:00.09, more than 33 seconds behind the Linn-Mar flash.



Jenks wanted the record and she got it. She had "9:27" imprinted on her brain, knowing full well what she needed to eclipse Flood.

"Coming down the final straightaway, I found where 9:27 was (in her head) and I starting counting down to how many seconds I had left to get there," she said.

She came flying down the stretch, lapping runners as she raced for the record.

"I knew if I was going to miss it by a tenth of a second or miss it by a second, I would never live

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that down. Ever," she said. "That last stretch, my legs were getting pretty beat up."

Somebody has written a book about the loneliness of the long-distance runner, but Jenks did not mind running by herself Thursday. She glanced at the big video board at Drake, looking to see where people were, but nobody else was in sight.

"They kept zooming out and kept zooming out (with the camera) and I couldn't see anybody. 'All right, no-one's here, that's cool, that's OK,'" she remembered thinking.

Jenks won the 3000 and 1500 at the Drake Relays last year and now has three titles at Drake.

She previously had the second-fastest time in the 3000 in state history with a 9:35.69 from earlier this season, so now she has the fastest and third-fastest clockings in state history with Flood in the middle.

"I'm really, really happy about it," she said. "I didn't know I'd be able to break the record this early."