

Metro track athletes have golden chance

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 20 May 2015 20:06 - Last Updated Wednesday, 20 May 2015 20:53



Metro athletes might need to hire a Brink's truck to haul all their gold medals back home from the state track meet in Des Moines this week.

Metro girls are favored to win seven events at the Class 4A meet at Drake Stadium and Metro boys are ranked No. 1 in three events. In addition, numerous Metro individuals and relay teams are ranked No. 2 or No. 3 and are quite capable of moving into the victory circle.

The Linn-Mar girls, featuring distance star Stephanie Jenks and freshman phenom Payton Wensel, could have enough firepower to claim the 4A team championship if a few things break their way.

The state meet will be held Thursday, Friday and Saturday with all seven Metro schools in the running for high honors (Cedar Valley Christian does not have a varsity track program).

Jenks, a junior, has already won five state titles and is favored to win three more this week. She has no challengers in the 1500 and 3000 meter runs and is also favored in the 800.

Wensel is ranked No. 1 in the 400 meter dash and is a key ingredient on several strong relay teams for Linn-Mar. The Lions are ranked No. 1 in the 4x800 relay with Maddie Saville, Wensel, Hanna Saville and Amber Decker.

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The Jefferson High School girls have a remarkable collection of sprinters again this year and are ranked No. 1 in the 4x100 and 4x200 relays. The J-Hawks own the Iowa all-time best in the 4x200 and are tied for the all-time best in the 4x100.

Jefferson's blazing quartet of Jasmine Blue, Lucy Schneekloth, Abbie Ranschau and Morgan Meese are capable of going even faster in those events and are a threat in the sprint medley as well.

On the boys side, Cedar Rapids Prairie junior Jalen Rima enters the state meet as the guy to beat in the 200 and 400 meter dashes. Rima placed sixth in the 400 last year and has moved to the top of the charts this season.

Linn-Mar ranks No. 1 in the 4x200 relay with Austin Fleider, Tristan Freese, Griffin Freese and Danny Gorsich sharing the baton. The Kennedy boys are strong in the field events with Shaun Beyer leading the way in the high jump and long jump.