

Sommer twins giving track a whirl

Written by Jim Ecker

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CEDAR FALLS — Katie and Kristie Sommer plan to play basketball and softball at the same college next year, but they wanted to try something different this spring before graduating from Linn-Mar High School.

The Sommer twins have joined the Linn-Mar track team and are competing in the sport for the first time since they were eighth graders in Dubuque.

Naturally, both girls are sprinters. And naturally, they handed the baton to each other on the 4x100 relay at the Mississippi Valley Conference indoor meet Tuesday at the UNI-Dome in Cedar Falls.

"It's our senior year and we wanted to try something new," said Katie. "We were told to go out for track the past three years (at Dubuque Senior), but we were committed to softball. Now it's our senior year. We wanted to try it."

Kristie Sommer said they are leaning between Wartburg College or St. Thomas (Minn.) right now, but they definitely plan to attend college together and play basketball and softball. "We'll probably make our decision in early April," she said.

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The Linn-Mar Lions already had a strong track team that finished seventh at the Class 4A state meet last May. Coach Nathan Hopp said the Sommer twins make them even stronger. The Lions needed more sprinters and now they have them.

The Sommers have practiced with the track team for less than two weeks, yet they are already varsity sprinters and helped the Lions place third in the 4x100 relay Tuesday with their speed and a smooth handoff.

"They have a lot of potential. For them, the sky's the limit," said Hopp. "There's a whole world of potential that we have yet to tap into."

The Sommer twins are accomplished athletes in basketball and softball, but they have not run track in four years.

"Definitely butterflies," Kristie Sommer said after the 4x100 relay. "It was definitely different than anything I've ever done before. But running is running."

Katie Sommer helped Linn-Mar place third in the sprint medley at the Iowa State indoor meet Monday. Kristie Sommer made her debut Tuesday, and Hopp thought it made sense to have them pass the baton to each other.

"It was a very impressive race," he said. "Just knowing in basketball they had such good chemistry, it was pretty much a done deal."



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They passed the baton like they'd been doing it for years, rather than days.

"It's our first time handing off to each other," said Katie Sommer. "Even in eighth grade we never did that.

"We've got that 'twin' thing," she said with a smile, "so hopefully that will work."

The Sommers think running on the track team will improve their speed and help them in softball this season at Linn-Mar and beyond. And aside from that, they enjoy it.

"I love it," said Katie Sommer. "I love the team. I love everything about it. I wish I would have gone out the other three years."

Stephanie Jenks and Amber Decker, Linn-Mar's top runners, did not compete at the MVC meet Tuesday. The Lions figure to have another strong club once they put all the pieces together for the outdoor campaign, but they'll need a strong team to challenge the Jefferson J-Hawks for supremacy in the Metro area, conference and state.

Cedar Rapids Jefferson won six of the 14 running events Tuesday and demonstrated its power in the relays by taking the 4x100, 4x200, 4x400 and shuttle hurdle relay. Lucy Schneekloth claimed the 60 meter dash (7.68) and Madison Ranschau won the 60 hurdles (8.82).

Madison Ranschau, Abbie Ranschau, Marge Meese and Autumn Anderson ran the 4x100 relay for the J-Hawks (51.09). Abbie Ranschau, Jasmine Blue, Meese and Schneekloth formed the 4x200 relay (1:47.32).

Sam Kitterman, Schneekloth, Meredith Konigsfeld and Jasmine Blue won the 4x400 relay (4:10.3). Abbie Ranschau, Kitterman, Brenna Parke and Madison Ranschau won the shuttle hurdle relay (38.07).

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Alyssa Averhoff won the 3000 meter run for Cedar Rapids Kennedy (11:24.56) and placed second in the 800 (2:30.60). Amarri Waller finished third in the 60 meter dash (7.74) and the Cougars placed third in the distance medley (4:46.17).

Amara Taylor of Washington captured the 400 meter dash (1:02.90) and placed second in the 200 (27.68).

Paige Pritts of Cedar Rapids Prairie took the long jump (15-8 1/2). The Hawks got third-place showings from Rachel Griffin in the shot put (35-1), Nicole Miller in the high jump (4-8), Hannah Grimm in the high jump (4-8) and the shuttle hurdle relay.

Blue finished second in the 60 meter dash for Jefferson and Katie Beer was third in the long jump (15-4).

Hanna Saville finished third in the 800 meter run for Linn-Mar (2:30.96).

No team scores were kept.