

Rima claims state title in 400

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - Jalen Rima scrunched his face and shook his head when former Cedar Rapids Prairie football coach Mike Morrissey told him to join the track team two years ago.

Rima did not want to run around in circles, but Morrissey made it perfectly clear: No track, no football.

"I wasn't going to go out my freshman year, but because of him I went out," Rima said Thursday, all smiles. "Thank god he made me."

Rima blazed to victory in the 400 meter dash in 48.85 seconds at the Class 4A state track meet in Des Moines and is now perfectly happy to run track instead of just running pass patterns.

In fact, the faster he runs in track, the more attention he gets from Division I college football teams. Iowa, Iowa State, Northern Iowa and others called Morrissey a few days after Rima ran an incredibly fast 400 meter split in a relay at the Drake Relays this year.

"Right after Drake when my times started dropping, that's when all the football schools started calling," said Rima, a junior. "They said they're looking forward to seeing me in camps this summer and see what I can do."

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They already know he can run fast. He's also seeded No. 1 in the 200 meter dash at the state meet Saturday and he's qualified for the 100 finals as well Saturday.

If Rima keeps running like this, college track coaches will be calling soon as well. "It's nice," he said. "I know a lot of people want me to run track, but my love is football."

Rima placed sixth in the 400 meter dash at the state meet last year as a sophomore and zoomed all the way to the winner's circle this year.

"Crazy," he said, smiling. "It's a blessing."



The Kennedy Cougars received strong performances in the field events Thursday and are in second place in the Class 4A standings with 25 points, behind Waukee (34).

Willie Rhoads placed second in the high jump at 6-foot-8 and his buddy Shaun Beyer finished third at 6-foot-7. In addition, Dalles Jacobus took second in the discus at 164 feet, 6 inches and Jackson Coker placed sixth in the discus at 157-7.

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Rhoads had his heart set on winning the high jump, but Jared Seay of Johnston defended his title by clearing 6-foot-9. Rhoads was visibly upset after the event and needed to walk away from a pair of reporters to compose himself.

"I can't really do this right now," he said unhappily and walked off.

Rhoads and Beyer encouraged each other during the high jump competition, fist-bumping every time they cleared a new height and comparing notes.

"I know Willie is not happy, because he really wanted the championship," said Beyer. "But we're second and third in the state, so you can't really complain about it.

"I got a P.R. (personal record) and Willie tied a P.R., so we were right there at our best."

The Linn-Mar Lions placed third in the 4x800 relay in 7:54.11 with Greyson Dolezal, Joe A'Hearn, Michael Mather and Bryan Fogerty sharing the baton. The Ames Little Cyclones smashed the all-time record in the 4x800 in 7:41.43.

Dalton Gosch of Linn-Mar finished fifth in the 400 meter dash (50.01) and Ryan Murphy placed eighth for the Lions in the 3,200 meter run (9:51.94).

Murphy stumbled and fell in exhaustion a few meters shy of the finish line, but got to his feet and courageously finished the race.

Linn-Mar is in sixth place in the team standings with 11 points, and Prairie is in eighth place with 10 points.

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Landen Akers of Washington took third in the 400 meter dash in 50.01 seconds, repeating his third-place finish from the 2014 state meet.

The Xavier Saints finished sixth in the 4x800 relay in Class 3A in 8:08.10 with Evan Gradoville, Josh Gerke, Joe Welch and Steven Culpepper.

Blair Brooks of Marion tied for seventh in the Class 3A high jump at 6 feet, 3 inches.