

Jenks claims 7th title at Drake

Written by Jim Ecker
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DES MOINES - As it turns out, Stephanie Jenks can run in traffic. And she's developed a strong kick for the rare occasion when she's actually challenged in a race.

The Linn-Mar junior needed both skills Friday to capture the 800 meter run at the 106th Drake Relays for her seventh career victory in America's Classic.

Jenks maneuvered her way through a tight pack of runners and sprinted down the home stretch to win the 800 in 2 minutes, 9.64 seconds in a talented field.

Jasmine Staebler of Clayton Ridge (2:11.40), Erika Lewis of Waukee (2:12.38) and Joy Ripslinger of Davenport Assumption (2:12.42) gave Jenks a good race, but the Linn-Mar junior had too much speed and too much moxie for them all.

"I really don't have to kick too often, but this is one of the things we've been working on, being able to shift gears during the race," said Jenks. "I had to have it at Kansas last weekend (when she won the 1600 at the Kansas Relays).

"I didn't realize I had a kick," she said modestly.

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Jenks captured the 3000 meter run at Drake Thursday by more than 30 seconds and usually cruises to victories in the 1500 and 3000. The 800 is not her specialty, however, and she was sitting in only fifth place after 400 meters Friday.

Jenks found room to run on the second lap and made her move. "There was a lot of surging and stopping abruptly," she said. "Once they let up, I poured myself through."

Jenks is peerless in the 1500 and 3000 in Iowa, but the 800 is a different story. "I'm getting accustomed to it, but it's not my favorite," she said.

It was congested at the start of the race and Jenks failed to get out front, forcing her to bide her time and step carefully.

"I'm not a very good person getting off the line," she said. "It's something that's really going to hurt me later on, but I'm really working on it."



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Jenks technically defended her title in the 800 at Drake, although she did not actually win the race on the blue oval last year. Kaley Ciluffo of Pleasant Valley beat Jenks in the 800 in 2014, but Ciluffo was later stripped of the title for violating IGHS AU eligibility rules.

The same thing happened in the aftermath of the Class 4A state meet last year, with Jenks ascending to the title after Ciluffo was declared ineligible. Jenks reluctantly counts the 800 in 2014 as part of her seven titles at Drake.

"I do, but I don't," she remarked. "I went out there and gave it my hardest. But Kaley did beat me. She still deserves to have that title."

Jenks has three Drake titles in the 3000, two crowns in the 1500 and two titles in the 800. She'll be gunning for another title in the 1500 Saturday afternoon.

In other highlights Friday, the Jefferson boys finished a tight second in the 4x200 relay with Jacob Beaton, Manny Olutunde, Jimmy Itangishaka and Dan Larson timed in 1:29.79. Cedar Falls won the race in 1:29.74

Prairie placed second in the boys 1600 sprint medley in 3:27.08 with Marty Borseth, Keagan Pinter, Jalen Rima and Tysen VanDraska. Dowling won the race in 3:26.48.

Abbie Ranschau of Jefferson placed third in the 100 hurdles in 15.06.

The Washington boys were fourth in the 4x200 relay (1:30.29). The Linn-Mar girls finished fifth in the 800 sprint medley (1:48.89). The Linn-Mar boys placed sixth in the 1600 sprint medley (3:43.78)

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Jackson Coker of Kennedy placed fifth in the discus (166-11). Willie Rhoads of Kennedy finished eighth in the long jump (20-10).

Amber Decker of Linn-Mar ran eighth in the 800 (2:15.43).