

Roxana's Hawkins signs track letter to Iowa

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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ROXANA – Jordan Hawkins parlayed an outstanding performance at last year's IHSA Class 2A state track meet into a scholarship for Iowa's track and field program.

Hawkins, who took fourth with a throw of 177-7 at last season's meet at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston after coming off shoulder surgery earlier in the season, signed with the Big Ten's Hawkeyes in a ceremony at Roxana's Milazzo Gym Saturday afternoon.

“Iowa City's going to be home for the next four or five years,” Hawkins said. “The biggest thing for me was that the school felt like home; Iowa City was just everything I wanted – it's a little over four-and-a-half-hours (by car); it's not too bad if I need to get home for a weekend.”

Hawkins plans on majoring in kinesiology and exercise science with an aim of going to school for physical therapy after earning his degree. “A good thing is that last year, they had the No. 2 PT school in the country, so it's definitely a good education.”

Hawkins first came to track and field when he was in sixth grade. “I was actually a runner,” Hawkins recalled, “and I wasn't the fastest runner; I couldn't run long distances; my seventh-grade year, I wasn't thinking about coming out and coach Watts, who coached junior high, came up to me and said 'why don't you come out and throw?', so I did and I just fell in love with it.”

“We're very proud of him,” said Shells track coach Juli Akal about Hawkins signing with the Hawkeyes. “We're excited for him, excited for his future and I'm actually glad for Iowa because they're getting a really awesome athlete and a great kid on top of that; we're really excited for him and really proud of him.”

Hawkins has had a big presence on the Shells' track program, Akal felt. “He's had a huge impact on our program,” Akal said. “He's a great kid, he's turned out to be very much a mentor and coach for the younger kids below him; our throwing numbers – the kids who want to throw – have probably quadrupled since he started because everyone wants to be a Jordan Hawkins.

“He's such a positive influence on the kids; he doesn't mind helping the other kids out at all – he's good at that. He does a lot of individual work with (Shell throwing) coach (Scott) Stahlhut during our regular practice times – when they're working in groups, I know he helps (coach) Stahlhut showing kids how to do stuff.”

That Hawkins finished fourth in last year's state meet was a great performance, Akal thought. “He did everything he was supposed to do; he followed exactly what they wanted him to do,” Akal said. “He didn't push anything or do anything too soon and it turned out great for him.”

“We're very proud of him,” Stahlhut said. “Jordan puts a lot of time into it; he does all the right things. He does everything he needs to do to be good at throwing; he goes back and watches the World Championship (in track and field) and things like that (to pick up some tips).

“He's a very good motivator, he has a very strong work ethic, but he also likes to have fun too. All these other kids who come out to throw because Jordan's throwing, it's a good mix of serious and fun; he makes throwing fun.”

Hawkins has thrown both the discus and the shot put, but concentrated on the discus last season coming off the shoulder operation; at Iowa, he hopes to pick up the hammer throw and the 35-pound weight throw (the indoor version of the hammer throw); he does have goals for the coming track season with the Shells. “My main goal is to be the hardest worker, and hopefully being the hardest worker gives me a state championship.”