

Explorer relay teams set PRs at IHSA Class 1A state meet

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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CHARLESTON – For Marquette Catholic's girls, Thursday was certainly a learning experience.

The Explorers' 4x100 and 4x200 relay team of Jessica Cutts, Kennedie Koetzle, Daryn Hill and Brooklyn Taylor, as well as Riley Vickrey in the 1600 meters, did not advance into Saturday's finals of their events in qualifying of the 46th IHSA Class 1A Girls Track and Field Championship state meet at Eastern Illinois' O'Brien Stadium.

The team of Cutts, Koetzle, Hill and Taylor finished seventh in their heat of the 4x100 in 52.68 seconds and took fourth in their heat of the 4x200 in 1:50.48, while Vickrey finished 13th in the second heat of 1600 qualifying in 5:47.83. The heat winners (five each in the 4x100 and 4x200 and two heats in the 1600) advanced into Saturday's finals, along with the next fastest times among non-winners to fill the final field of nine in the relays and the final field of 12 in the 1600 meters. Vickrey will be running in the 3200 meters in Saturday's final session of the meet.

“I told the girls that reaching the state meet is a huge step forward for our program,” said Explorer coach Mike Brooks. “The relay team are the first ones to make it to state, so I told them to just relax and have fun and learn from the experience of being at state.

Both relay teams, despite not reaching Saturday's finals, had very good days – they set personal records for their events on the day. “They had PRs by a half-second,” Brooks said of the relays. “They didn't make mistakes in their handoffs and I'm very pleased with how they performed.”

Not only was Brooks happy with the PRs in both relays, he's also pleased with how Vickrey performed in her race Thursday. “She just continues to amaze me,” Brooks said of his sophomore distance runner. “In the sectional (at Gillespie), she ran really hard and also had a role in our 4x400 (relay) team after running three miles (in the 1600 and 3200).

“Riley's just mentally tough – there's no quit in her.”

The bonus for Brooks is that everyone will be back next year; Vickrey is a rising junior, Koetzle and Taylor are rising seniors, Hill is a rising junior and Cutts is a rising sophomore. “The girls were still up after their relays,” Brooks said. “This is an exciting time for the track program at Marquette; everyone's done really well and I'm really proud of all of them.”

Class 2A qualifying in all events was scheduled for Friday morning, while Class 3A qualifying will take place Friday afternoon; the finals in all three classes get under way at 10 a.m. Saturday. Real-time results for Friday's qualifying and Saturday's finals will be available at the IHSA web site, www.ihsa.org.

