



Shells' Distance Star Gabrielle Woodruff Races To Conference Cross Country Title, Is A Midwest Members Credit Union Athlete of the Month

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
October 18 2022 1:52 PM





ROXANA - Roxana's Gabrielle Woodruff is a determined competitor, and she was unstoppable at the Cahokia Conference Mississippi Division Meet Saturday morning at Salem High School.

Woodruff finished one-two with her stellar teammate Riley Doyle. Woodruff recorded a time of 18:20.3 and Doyle was second with a mark of 18:43.0.

Gabrielle Woodruff is a Midwest Members Credit Union Female Athlete of the Month for Roxana High School.

Gabrielle, who is the ultimate team member and a Shells' leader, was first concerned with trying to capture a championship with her talented squad. Roxana won the meet with 50 points and edged Freeburg with 52 points and Breese Central with 67 points.

The Roxana distance sensation said in the week leading up to the conference meet, her team knew they had a strong chance at the conference title and that Freeburg was going to be their main competitor with a tight pack of girls.

"I had no clue I was in contingency to win the conference championship myself until a few days before when we researched who I was running against," Gabrielle said. "So, it came to me as a surprise when my teammate Riley Doyle and I were out in the front within the first mile of the race already. After the race, we knew our top three runners

came in strong with a 1, 2, and 4 finish, but I stood there waiting for our number four and five runner to finish and I watched as the Freeburg team came pooling in one by one.

"It made me nervous until I was up on the stage after receiving my medal and heard Roxana had won by only 2 points! The Freeburg team congratulated us and I even got to hug some crying Freeburg girls."

Gabrielle said she had previously struggled with shin splints, putting a dent in her junior cross-country season. The Roxana distance runner was attacked with low iron issues in her junior track season, so she said it feels good to be back and doing great things.

"We are also the first sports team to win in the new conference here at Roxana, which is super exciting," she explained. "As for future goals, I'd like to officially run under 19:00 minutes, which has not been possible the last two meets because the courses were slightly shy of 3 miles. Coach says I can run much faster than just sub-19. Of course, a huge goal is to go with my team to state for my last year of high school."

"In 2021, I remember being a bystander at state and ever since then, it's been in my brain to get back to that state course at Detweiler this year. It has kind of fueled me all season. When track comes around, I want to attack our 3,200 and 1,600 school records of 5:27 in the 1,600 and 11:51 in the 3,200, all set by my former teammate Janelynn Wirth, who I always idolized."

Gabrielle has verbally committed to attend the University of Illinois-Springfield, which has developed strong women's cross-country and track-and-field teams in recent years.

Gabrielle's mom, Mechelle, said she and her father, Robert, could not be more proud of their daughter for all her accomplishments.

"Saturday at the conference race, I cheered her on after this first mile then ran over to the finish line," her mom said. "That is when Coach (Julie) Akal was walking up and told me Gabrielle was coming."

"When I saw Gabrielle run over the hill as the first-place runner for her division, I was so excited and happy for her! I was cheering and wooing like crazy! It was such a great moment for her."

Gabrielle's mom said her daughter is a dedicated distance runner and has worked very hard to get where she is today.

"She has had some setbacks but has come back stronger than ever," her mom said.
"Robert and I will be at the regional meet along with other families in Trenton at the regional ready to support and cheer Gabrielle and the Shells on again!"

