

Black & Gold

Tuscola girls win first ever state title in track and field

By Daniel L. Chamness

On Saturday afternoon, the Tuscola Lady Warriors made history.

Not only did they score 57 points to win the Illinois High School Association Class 1A State Championship on the girl's level, four girls left Eastern Illinois University's O'Brien Field with the following personal hardware: eight gold medals, one silver medal, a bronze medal and a fifth place medal. Four girls, 10 medals.

"I knew going into the meet that earning 10 medals was entirely possible," said Drew Sterkel, Tuscola's head coach. "This girls bought into the workouts and believed in the dream from the beginning of the season. Mentally, the girls would pick each other up. We accomplished what we did, because of the team. Yes we have stars. But, we also have role players that embraced those roles. And it was not just the runners that earned medals, we had girls all year in practice making these athletes better and better."

Other firsts for the Lady Warriors, any Lady Warrior, include this is the first state championship won by the females in any sport. The Warriors have two football state titles under their belt at the boys level.

The 800-meter relay team won the race combining the talents of four 200-meter sprinters to win in school record time of 1 minute, 44.11

seasons. The former record, which has stood since 1994, was 1:46.16. Alyssa Williams, would leave the park with three golds and one bronze medal, led off the relay. Williams ran a split of :24.30 seconds.

Less than one minute later, freshman Lia Patterson was gripping the baton, and dashing the anchor leg, which when she would cross the finish line, not only Williams and Patterson, but Mia Hausmann and Jillian Alexander, would earn the right to call themselves state champions in the relay event.

Patterson ran the final leg in :25.1.

"When I got the baton, I was just concentrating on not dropping the it," recalled the sophomore. "I just wanted to run a good leg and get the school record. It was great to medal in four events, that was my goal. I am proudest of the 200-meter dash and of course, the 800-meter relay."

Sandwiched between the performances of the four-medal athletes, was second leg Hausmann, who finished in :28.51, Alexander, the freshman, who finished in :27.2.

"I knew that Alyssa would be coming in very fast," said Hausmann. "I am laser focused on her rounding the corner. Once she hits the mark, I take off and reach back for the baton. When I feel it in my hand, I focus on running on the inside of my lane around the curve. When I am on the straightaway, I look for Jillian



MIA HAUSMANN, LEFT, passes the baton to Harley Woodard in the 400-meter relay. Making up the rest of the relay team were Keena Clodfelder and Jillian Alexander. Photo courtesy of Nora Mayberry/St. Joseph Record.

and focus on getting her the baton cleanly."

"When I got the baton, I was pretty sure we were in second place," said Alexander. "I had to push to get the baton to Lia, so she could finish

the race for us. It was really about pushing myself for my last race of the year."

Williams already had a gold medal by the time the 800-meter relay commenced. The 2021 state champion in the

100-meter dash, defended her crown, running a time of :12.31. She would win by 34/100ths of a second. Macon Meridian's Kailyn Moreland, also a Central Illinois Conference competitor, took second with a :12.65.

She would win the 200-meter dash as well and the senior would have plenty of backup. When the 200-meter dash started, the Lady Warriors were down to Newark 54-39. But, 18 points scored by not only Williams, who won in :25.04, but Patterson, who put eight points on the board with a time of :25.33 and a second place finish.

"Hollywood could not have written a better story than that," said Sterkel of the 200-meter dash. "We were pretty sure that Alyssa would win, but we knew that Lia could finish anywhere from second through seventh. When she got second, I breathed a little easier."

His senior leader and superstar was not as comfortable.

"I knew that Winnebago was still in the mix and they had the 1,600-meter relay to go," said Williams. "We were out there rooting for any team we thought had a shot to beat them."

Patterson would grab two more medals, both in the hurdle races. Patterson took third in the 300-meter hur-

dles. She finished in :45.83. Earlier in the day, the Lady Warrior freshman finished in :15.44.

Williams earned a third place medal in the long jump. She recorded a distance of 5.27 meters.

Prelims: The Lady Warriors got every athlete through the Thursday prelims, save the 400-meter relay. Hausmann, Harley Woodard, Keena Clodfelder and Alexander combined forces to run a :52.56. The foursome finished 21st overall. To advance out of the prelims, they had to finish in the top nine.

In the 800-meter relay on Thursday, the Lady Warriors finished with the fourth fastest time of the day. They broke the tape at 1:46.85. The same four that earned the state title two days later, ran the prelims on Thursday.

Williams ended Thursday with the top times in the 100-meter dash (:12.03) and 200-meter dash (:24.97). Her leap of 5.07 meters in the long jump was the ninth best effort of the prelims.

Patterson would finish the prelims, exactly where she finished the finals. In the 300-meter hurdle prelims, she finished in :46.76, which was the third fastest time. She ran a time of :15.24 in the 100-meter hurdles, which was fifth fastest time of the prelims.



TUSCOLA'S LIA PATTERSON reacts as she crosses the finish line in the 4x200 meter relay during the Class 1A IHSA Girls Track & Field State Finals. The team of Alyssa Williams, Mia Hausmann, Jillian Alexander, and Lia Patterson claimed the state title with a time of 1:44.11. Photo by Douglas Cottle.

Tuscola Lady Warriors win Regional title

By Daniel L. Chamness

It is not often that a regional winner has to turn around and play in the first round of the sectional a mere 24 hours later.

Except for a year when it rains, or the weather does not cooperate on a regular basis. Like 2021.

On Monday night, the Tuscola Lady Warriors celebrated not only their 21st win of the season, against six

defeats, but a regional championship. But, the celebration will be short-lived as the Lady Warriors will have to play, weather permitting, in the first round of the sectional. They are scheduled to play Heyworth at 6:30 p.m., under the lights at LeRoy.

"We do not know much about Heyworth, but we know they have a good pitcher," said Leonard Sementi, Tuscola's head coach. "And you do not

win a regional title if you are not a good team. Everyone is good at this point."

The Warriors topped the Argenta-Oreana Bombers 6-5 as the Lady Warriors finished with 10 hits. Tuscola's Adisyn Ring, Ava Boyer, Taylor Musgrave and Ella Boyer each had multiple hits. In addition, while they only had one hit each, Emily Czerwonka and Isabelle Wilcox each tripled.

"The top three hitters in our lineup (Ava Boyer, Musgrave and Ella Boyer) got the ball rolling in the first inning," said Sementi. "Zoey started an inning off with a triple and it made it very easy to get her home, while Izzy tripled with the bases loaded to drive home three. Both were timely, needed hits."

Ella Boyer was 2-for-4 with a double. She scored twice and drove home one. Musgrave and

Ring were each 2-for-3. Ava Boyer was 2-for-4 and scored a run.

The Lady Warriors earned the right to play the Lady Bombers for the regional title by topping the St. Teresa Bulldogs.

"We had a seven run first inning," reported Sementi of the game against the Lady Dawgs. "It really took the wind out of their sails."

Kerri Pierce was the pitcher

of record against the Lady Bombers. She worked seven innings, allowing four earned runs on eight hits. She fanned four and walked one.

"Kerri has been so solid for us," said Sementi. "It is only her first year in the varsity circle and she has put us on her back. We had two errors during one inning of play and she just kept throwing pitches necessary to get ground balls."