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Girls, boys dominate competition on way to titles in Whitewater meet

Strength in numbers may not be the greatest asset of the Grafton High School track and field teams this spring.

But when it comes to individual talent, the Black Hawks should be more than able to hold their own.

Coach Kevin Kriegel's squads wasted no time displaying their considerable skills at the season-opening Nelson/Daniel Classic in Whitewater last Friday.

Sparked by five first-place finishes, the Grafton girls raced to top honors in a 28-team small-schools field with 74 points. Lake Mills was a distant second with 39 points.

The Grafton boys were nearly as impressive in securing a title with 70 points, well ahead of runner-up Monona Grove's 49.5.

"It was a definitely a great day for us," Kriegel said. "We had a lot of strong performances in our first real meet of the season."

With most of their top athletes back from last year, the Hawks are expecting good things with regularity. Several record-setting performances in Friday's meet set the bar high quickly.

On the girls' side, juniors Cathy Brunette and Sara Grange "both had huge days for us," Kriegel said.

Brunette won the 55-meter hurdles in 8.91 seconds and the high jump with a 5-foot-6-inch effort that set a team indoor record.

Grange won the 55-meter dash in a team-record time of 7.34 seconds and placed second in the high jump (a personal-best 5-4).

Grafton also got victories from junior Katelyn Gallun in the 400 dash (1:04.31) and the 1,600 relay team of Gallun, Rachel Schmitz, Hana Taylor and Grange (4:23.05).

Placing second for the Hawks were the 800 team of Emily Schreiner, Carrie Herian, Brunette and Grange (1:52.07) and 3,200 team of Megan Pawlak, Kylie Longoria, Heidi Bauer and Katie Boehm (10:41.47).

Rounding out Grafton's top-10 finishes were a ninth by Ashley Tanski in the shot put (30-2) and 10th by Boehm in the 800 run (2:40.79).

After losing only three members of last year's team to graduation, the Grafton girls have plenty of experienced talent. Likely scoring leaders will be the Hawks' four state qualifiers in 2011 — Brunette in the high jump and 100 hurdles, Grange in the 100 and 200 dashes and the 400 relay of Brunette, Grange, Herian and Schreiner.

"We knew we would have a lot of girls back, so we expect to do well," Kriegel said.

On the boys' side Friday, Grafton had three winning performances.

Sophomore Erick Huertas placed first in the 400 dash (50.93) as did the 800 team of Willie McElligott, Kevin Wegner, Alex Gall and Zach DeBuhr (a meet-record 1:35.37) and 1,600 team of Huertas, Wegner, Matt Salm and Marcus Hill (a meet-record 3:33.71).

Placing second for the Hawks were Hill in the 400 dash (51.15), McElligott in the 55 dash (a team indoor record 6.7) and Jason Zahn in the shot put (a school-record 57-8.5).

Zahn, a senior, eclipsed a mark that was set outdoors.

Grafton also got thirds from DeBuhr in the 55 dash (6.71) and 3,200 team of Steven Duarte, Salm, Alex Olsen and Patrick Tobianski (8:49.82), a sixth from Tobianski in the 800 run (2;08.38) and eighth from Salm in the 800 run (2:13.42).

"We don't have a big squad, but we got a lot of points from the people we used," Kriegel said. "A lot of guys stepped up."

The Grafton boys are again counting on steady production from a corps of veteran talent led by Zahn, who was second in the discus and 11th in the shot put at last year's Division 1 state

meet.

The Hawks' other returning state qualifiers are Hill, a junior who was third in the 400 dash, and Huertas, a sophomore who was a member of a seventh-place 1,600 relay.

The next meet for the Grafton boys will be the Madison West Relays on Saturday, March 31.

The Grafton girls will face a tougher challenge in their next outing — the North Shore Conference indoor meet Thursday, April 3, at Cedarburg.

Image Information: KEVIN WEGNER (left) and Willie McElligott — shown making a baton exchange in a race last year — will be key members of the Grafton boys' track and field team this season. Last Friday, they ran on first-place relays at the Nelson/Daniel Classic in Whitewater. Press file photo