

Port sends four girls, two boys' relay teams to Div. 1 state track meet; Grafton's Zahn, Brunette advance

This week won't be the first time Port Washington girls' track and field coach Joe Adamak has had athletes in a WIAA state meet, but it will be one of the Pirates' most diverse groups of state qualifiers in recent memory.

The Pirates will have a sprinter, distance runner and two field athletes vie for honors in Division 1 competition at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Payton Greisch leads the Port contingent, coming off a first-place finish in the 400-meter dash at last Saturday's Beaver Dam Sectional. The junior earned her second straight state appearance by posting a winning time of 59.28 seconds.

The Pirates' other state qualifiers are junior Marly Trier in the discus (second at 115 feet, 1 inch) and freshmen Emma Shelander in the triple jump (second at 35-1) and Bianca Benkley in the 3,200 run (third in 11:15.18).

The Port boys and Grafton boys and girls will also be represented at the state level.

Qualifying for the Port boys were the 1,600 and 3,200 relay teams. The 1,600 relay of Joe McIlree, Steven Nelson, Adam Prom and Justin Fote placed second (3:27.57), as did the 3,200 relay of McIlree, Jared Sandlin, Fote and Jeff Bartow (8:06.14). Both teams had season-best times.

Prom, Nelson and Bartow are seniors. McIlree, Fote and Sandlin are juniors. All but Sandlin will be making their first state appearances.

Advancing for Grafton from the Homestead Sectional were sophomore Justin Zahn in the boys' discus (second at 150-7) and freshman Cathy

Brunette in the 100 hurdles (fourth in 15.3). Brunette missed an automatic state berth by failing to place in the top three but qualified by having the sixth-fastest time for all sectionals.

Adamak was impressed with the sectional performance of his squad, which finished seventh in a 17-team with 42 points. Kimberly won the sectional title with 142 points, and Plymouth and Neenah shared second with 68.

"We had some great efforts in the sectional," Adamak said. "It's unique to have this many people qualified in different events."

Greisch has her team's highest state seeding — seventh in the 400 dash. In their events, Benkley is seeded 11th, Shelander 14th and Trier 17th. All four are peaking at the right time and poised for solid efforts in the season finale, according to Adamak.

Destination La Crosse

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN
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"All of the girls worked hard to get to this point, and we'll try to get their best performances at the state meet," he said.

Benkley, in particular, has picked up the pace. Her 3,200-meter sectional time trimmed 10 seconds off her own school record. She also set the Port girls' mark in the 1,600 run (5:16.06) at the North Shore Conference outdoor meet May 18.

The Port girls' other sectional scoring finishes were a fourth place by the 3,200 relay of Benkley, Greisch, Ashley Hilton and Diana Seer (9:48.26); sixth by Greisch in the 800 run (2:31.51) and eighths by Trier in the shot put (32-10-1/2) and Claire Kinzer in the pole vault (8-0).

Port boys' coach Mark Pasten said he expected the 3,200 relay to "have a good shot" at qualifying for state but was surprised to have the 1,600 relay advance. He singled out the final two legs by Prom and McIlree, who combined to rally the Pirates for a top-three finish.

"Adam came from behind to get us to second, and Joe came through at the end," Pasten said.

Port finished 13th out of 17 teams in the boys' sectional standings with 22 points. Kimberly was first with 106 points, and runner-up Neenah had 83.

The Port boys' other sectional scoring efforts were sixths by Sandlin in the 800 run (1:59.98) and Adam Schoenfeld in the triple jump (41-9).

Zahn and Brunette will both be making their first state appearances.

"It's great to have them going on," Grafton coach Kevin Kriegel said. "They've worked very hard this season and are very deserving."

Zahn trailed only Homestead's Justin Barber, one of the state's top throwers, who won the discus at 178-11.

Brunette, whose brother Eric qualified for state for Grafton in the boys' 110 hurdles last year, faced a tough challenge in a talented 100-meter field led by Homestead's Marissa Savitch (14.2).

The Grafton boys totaled 19 points, good for 10th in a 16-team sectional field topped by Homestead (127). Arrowhead was second with 82 points.

Grafton's other scoring finishes were fifths by Zahn in the shot put (47-2-1/2) and the 1,600 relay of Kevin Wegner, Marcus Hill, Sean Hanley and Justin Tomashek (3:28.03); a seventh by the 3,200 relay of Alex Konop, Adam Kahmann, Stefan Lundgren and Ryan Rieboldt (8:38.76); and an eighth by Sean Hanley in the 400 dash (53.83).

The Black Hawks were 12th in the 15-team field with 25 points. Arrowhead placed first with 143 points, and Nicolet was second with 66.

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The Grafton girls' other scoring included a fourth by Samie McKee in the high jump (5-0); fifth by the 400 relay of Emily Schreiner, Sara Grange, Rachel Aschenbrenner and Emily Van Langen (50.63); sixths by Van Langen in the 200 dash (27.2), the 3,200 relay of Megan Pawlak, Jamie Barrels, Britta Lahr and Jessica Lazzari (10:31.58) and 800 relay of Carrie Herian, Grange, Aschenbrenner and Van Langen (1:47.52); and seventh by Aschenbrenner in the 100 dash (13.46).

The Division 1 state meet will begin at 9:30 a.m. Friday at Veterans Memorial Stadium and continue at 10:30 a.m. Saturday.