

Sports

GIRLS TRACK AND FIELD

PCM climbs up standings at Drake Relays

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DES MOINES — Three freshmen and a junior ran on the famous blue oval for the first time in their careers at the Drake Relays this past weekend

Morgan Karr competed in the 100-meter hurdles on April 28 and then anchored the Mustangs' 4x100 relay team on April 29.

In both events, PCM was not faster than its previous season-best times but finished higher than it came in at.

"I was really happy for a group of four who had never competed at the Drake Relays before," PCM girls' head track and field coach Eric Karr said. "The 4x100 relay had a great experience as I expect all four of those runners to be back at the state meet.

"Morgan ran a nice, clean race and it was a great experience for her. I think she's ready for a PR as we head toward the end of the season."

Morgan Karr came into the 100 hurdles with the 28th-best qualifying time. She ran a time similar to what she qualified with but finished 20th in the preliminary round. There were 32 runners in the field.

She was clocked in 15.76 seconds. The Mustangs will compete in a Class 2A state qualifier at Central Decatur later this year and Shenandoah's Chloe Denton and Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont's Molly Shafer also will be at that location. Denton (15.59) placed 17th and Shafer (15.69) was 19th at the Drake Relays.

Ali Frandsen of Ames had the top time in the preliminary round and then finished first overall with a time of 14.33 seconds.

"I do wish I would have done better, but I also am just happy for the experience," Karr said. "The goal was to get down to a 15.5 or a 15.6. I want to stay consistent most of all. I'm still working on my trail leg and we hope to get that figured out before state."

Karr is currently battling shin splints. She competed in last week's home meet on April 24 but rested until the April 28 preliminary heat. Coach Karr was prepared, but Morgan Karr powered through the injury.

"I was out last year for it," Morgan Karr said. "It hurts, but I just try to power through it."

The Mustangs' 4x100 relay team came into the Drake Relays with the 87th-best qualifying time. They left Drake Stadium with an 80th-place finish.

The foursome of Lillian Humpal, Jorja Teeter, Tiffani Koonce and Karr completed the race in 52.55 seconds. The Mustangs' qualifying time was 52.22.

"We were trying to get a better time, but we also just wanted a good experience," Teeter said. "It's a lot of fun but really stressful, too, when you go off by yourself and split from the group."

"Having three freshmen on the team is a big deal I think. Everyone talks about it, but I'm not sure any of us know how big of a deal it really is."

Humpal agreed that the experience was stressful at times. Having two other freshmen on the team helped her with the nerves and it made it less crazy.

"We wanted to move up and get a good time," Humpal said. "It was very stressful at first. But when I got on the



PCM freshman Morgan Karr, right, competes in the 100-meter hurdles at the annual Drake Relays in Des Moines on April 28. Karr finished 20th in the 32-person field.
Troy Hyde/PCM Explorer



The PCM girls 4x100-meter relay team which competed at the Drake Relays on April 29 featured (from left) freshmen Lillian Humpal and Jorja Teeter, junior Tiffani Koonce and freshman Morgan Karr. The foursome placed 80th in the field.
Troy Hyde/PCM Explorer

track I just kept telling myself to have fun."

Koonce's only experience in a big-time meet came at the state cross country meet her freshman season.

Her transition to sprints came earlier this spring during sprint time trials at practice.

"We were at practice and coach was timing us, and I was tied for third for the fastest 25 meters so I started doing sprint workouts and here I am. I am very surprised," Koonce said. "Running here was nerve-wracking. It happened so fast. Warming up felt really cool. The race was windy. I didn't feel my fastest either."

Heart of Iowa Athletic Conference ri-



S. Steenhoek



Bennett

vals Greene County (51.44) and Roland-Story (52.18) finished 39th and 73rd, respectively, in the race.

EBF (52.16) and Davis County (52.03) are two schools that will be at the same state qualifier later this month and

they placed 71st and 65th, respectively. Des Moines Hoover was the girls' 4x100 relay champion with a time of 48.81 seconds.

"We've run pretty consistently, but it's a bigger meet and better competition so we really wanted to improve our time and our placing," Morgan Karr said. "We had a sketchy handoff, but it worked out. We ran really hard for this and we are all glad we got to experience

it together."

Mustangs cruise to easy win in home meet

MONROE — PCM showed off its depth in front of the home fans on April 24.

The Mustangs registered nine wins and 24 top-three finishes and scored double points in 10 events during a dominant victory in the PCM High School Girls Invitational.

PCM finished 1-2, 1-3 and 2-3 twice, was 2-4 three times and the Mustangs took a victory lap after scoring 213 points.

West Marshall finished second with 100 points, Pleasantville took third with 99, Lynnville-Sully scored 85 points in fourth and Southeast Warren (35) and the PCM JV (21) completed the field.

The Mustangs won four relays and they were no worse than second in six of the seven. They won the 4x200, 4x400, 4x800 and shuttle hurdle relays.

In the 4x200, Stella Stravers, Ryan Bennett, Addison Shannon and Humpal won the race in 1 minute, 58.19 seconds.

The 4x400 relay team of Paiten Rumbaugh, Sophia Steenhoek, Claire Van Wyk and Elle Davis won the race in 4:36.79.

One of the Mustangs' first wins of the night came in the 4x800 relay. The foursome of Addison Steenhoek, Paige Steenhoek, Koonce and Abi Teeter finished in 10:50.26.

The shuttle hurdle relay team was without one of its regulars, but Kylie Tuller, Jorja Teeter, Humpal and Morgan Karr won the race in 1:11.37.

Both the sprint medley and 4x100 relays placed second. In the sprint medley, Stravers, Shannon, Davis and Rumbaugh finished second in 2:05.56.

The 4x100 relay team of Bennett, Koonce, Humpal and Jorja Teeter took

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Ver Helst

CONTINUED FROM 1

special education director was leaving, operational sharing was an option," Ver Helst said. "I talked to leadership to explore taking on that position. It was bittersweet for me because I still miss being the principal but I love what I do now; it is my passion, my niche. I love supporting families with students with disabilities so they feel confident their needs are being met. I am just happy to serve that way."

In her position, Ver Helst works with compliance monitors to ensure all special education students have their individual education plans (IEP) up and running and have evidence-based instruction. She also supports the teaching staff to make sure they have their

required trainings and best practices.

One area she has been focused on is writing instruction. By working with Heartland AEA, the districts have expanded their teaching capabilities and finding positive results from their work.

"We did five different sessions with trainers from Heartland AEA on learning how to assess, determine the need and instruct for students with disabilities," Ver Helst said. "The teachers were grateful for that because we have been hearing all kinds of positives from using it."

A portion of the student population that has had a variety of methods used for instruction through the years, Ver Helst is excited to find the best way for each child to succeed.

"It can be high stress because

it is high stakes. It is a group of students who have protected rights. It can be emotional," Ver Helst said. "One reward for me is seeing that I can help facilitate a common plan or compromise to make sure kids' needs are being met. To make sure everyone feels equipped and empowered in the process and the result. If I can be a part of helping a parent go home and know the school is doing what they can to meet their child's needs, that is very rewarding for me. Also equally knowing I have supported the teaching staff to know that everyone is coming together and working to meet the unique challenges with the students."

She is also working with staff and students to understand the struggles kids with special needs have and how to help them when they are in need.

"First it is to remember it is a disability and not always a choice. We can give some grace and empathy in that," Ver Helst said. "I think it is easier to understand when a child can't read or struggle to read, it is our job to teach them. If a child struggles with social-emotional regulation, it is our job to teach them, not punish them. There are natural consequences but if we have focus on positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors and self regulation and teaching replacement behaviors when they are in crisis. They don't want to be in crisis. They want friends, to belong, feel safe and stable. They have remorse and it is a stressful time for them, too, to feel dis-regulated."

Separating the behavior from the child is something she encourages. Often mental health and self regulation go

hand-in-hand and the more people are aware the better the outcome.

"I've seen a lot where students will come around a child that is struggling and instead of isolating them they will lift them up and be supportive, modeling behaviors from the teachers," Ver Helst said. "It is heartwarming because they are willing to embrace the differences and help support them."

Even in what can be a very stressful position, Ver Helst is excited each day to walk into the schools and work to make it the best experience possible for students.

"My cliché is: educators are not in it for the income, they do it for the outcome. I love to see when I've been able to equip and empower teachers and see students be successful," Ver Helst said. "It is about the kids. I just want to help."