

Fairport athletes take 4th and 6th at the State Championships in the 4 x 400 meter relay

Competing at the NYS Track & Field Championships at Cornell on Saturday, the 4 x 400 meter relay defied the odds--and their seeding--to earn 4th place medals in the NYSPHSAA and 6th in the NYS Federation Championships.

Also competing was Emily Renna in two individual events, the triple jump and the 55 meter hurdles.

Renna, competing in the hurdle field of 28 competitors, ran 8.78 in the 4th preliminary heat. She finished 3rd and advanced to the semi-final round of 16. In the semis, she finished 6th in 8.77. She was 11th overall and did not advance.

While the hurdle semi-finals were being contested, the triple jump was simultaneously being staged—Renna was hard pressed to get in two jumps, let alone the four allowed under other circumstances. She recorded a "hurried" 33' 11.25" jump—24th in the field—exactly her seeding position in the field of 29.

"I did the best I could in the hurdles without being able to get over any hurdles in practice prior to the race. The state meet is so rushed, with the three-hour duration of the girls' side of the meet; it doesn't allow any practice time over the hurdles. Considering that, the races were OK I guess. I felt I could have done better if allowed to get over some hurdles before," commented Emily the next day. She is the first Fairport athlete, in more than fifteen years, to compete in either the hurdles or the triple jump at the indoor state championships.

The other athletes competing at the state championships for Fairport were: Angie Zabloutny, Michelle Barnum, Janessa Mathews, Lauren Burke, Julia Sanger and Rachel Malone. Four of the athletes would run the 4 x 400m relay; the other two would be alternates.

Thirteen teams from eleven sections, the CHSAA and PSAL qualified one-4 x 400m relay team each for state championships. Relays at the state championships are a complicated competition with two semi-final heats of six and seven teams each battling for the eight-team final. The top two teams in each semi advanced along with the next four fastest times. In heat I, it became a tactical affair with Brentwood breaking out ahead of the others—they won with 4:05.59 while the next four all battled for the last spot—all came across the finish line hundreds of a second apart—Skaneateles ran 4:12.19 and earned the last position from heat I. The top seed, Mount Vernon [3:53.36], and Colonie, the #5 seed [3:58.94] were left out of the final from heat I—they didn't have one of the eight-fastest times in the semi-finals.

Heat II would be the "hot heat" with all the teams going out quickly—they were determined not to replicate the heat I outcome. Six of the seven teams in heat II would qualify for the finals with Fairport's 4:09.52, the 4th fastest in heat II, advancing. Ahead of #10 seeded Fairport at 4:14.16 in that heat were Garden City [4:04.71], Newburgh [4:07.32], Cardonzo [4:08.67]. Waverly, of Section IV, finished 5th, just .31 of a second behind fairport. Kellenberg Memorial took the 6th spot in the finals with 4:11.91.

Most teams have the luxury of inserting fresher, and often faster runners in the finals for their teams, but not so with Fairport. In the finals, the 2nd last event of the day, Garden City won the state Federation and NYSPHSAA championships with the day's fastest time, 4:01.96, less than a second ahead of Newburgh. In third was Cardozo with 4:04.06--four seconds faster than their prelim time—initially they had been disqualified for interference, but the jury of appeals overturned the disqualification. Brentwood finished 4th, a second faster than before. Kellenberg ran 4:08.35 to take the 5th slot, three seconds faster than they ran earlier. Fairport's 4:11.87, two seconds slower, got them 6th place in the Federation Championship, which included all schools in the competition [public schools as well as NYC's PSAL, private and the Catholic High School Athletic Association]. Waverly, in 7th and out of the medals, ran .58 seconds behind Fairport. Skaneateles finished 8th with 4:13.63, one second faster than Fairport's 10th seeded time coming into the meet.

Angie Zabloutny, Michelle Barnum, Janessa Mathews and Lauren Burke ran the relay, and it was the 3rd consecutive year Fairport medalled in the state championships in that relay. Their performance duplicated the team 2008 finish, a 4th in NYSPHSAA and 6th in Federation. "All the girls ran so well in the prelims and in the finals; we couldn't be more pleased and happy for them," said head coach Sean Van Laeken. "It's a tradition for Fairport to do well in that relay each season."

"It was special being able to step up on the podium twice and get a medal along with my teammates," said a smiling foursome of highly competitive athletes—Angie Zabloutny, Michelle Barnum, Janessa Mathews and Lauren Burke.

"We don't think the girls could have run any better than they did," said coach Rick Guido. "They defied all kinds of predictions of doom they couldn't make it to the finals, let alone medal. Fairport's 4 x 400m relay was the only relay of four Section V had on the day for the Section V girls to medal. Lauren Burke also qualified in the 600 meters, but decided after the relay made the finals not to compete; she saved herself for the relay later in the meet.