

Boys’ track team eager for more gold

By Paige Happ

With a state title in the 4x400-meter relay last May, the boys’ track team is looking for more state hardware this spring as five members of the team are training in the off-season with the Iowa Speed Program through the University of Iowa.

Seniors Charles Huesmann, Caden Meyer, and Rylan Perry, junior Brady Daufeldt, and sophomore Colby Gast are grateful for the opportunity to train for a program like Iowa Speed, which is run by Hawkeye track coach Joey Woody.

Huesmann and Gast are the two returning legs of the state title relay team while Meyer qualified for state in the shuttle hurdle relay.

“The program has helped me to become more explosive and stay in shape, so I can run my desired times at meets,” said Huesmann.

Meyer has also seen great progress in his running abilities after breaking down his running form.

“I think it has helped me tremendously,” said Meyer. “It has made my form a lot better, my overall speed and most importantly my starts have gotten the most progress. I also am more conditioned than I would have been without it.”

Gast said the off-season program has also benefited his running form.

“With the specific workouts we do, my form and technique has definitely improved,” he said. “The hard endurance workouts we do will hopefully boost me into the season, so I will be more prepared for the early meets.”

Huesmann wants to qualify for the Drake Relays in the open 400-meter race and qualify in at least three events for state.

“Having a state title under my belt gives me a lot more confidence when I’m out on the track,” said Huesmann.

The other members of the state title team were graduates Nolan DeLong and Garrett Hollenback. It was the first state title for the boys’ team since 2011 when Caleb Freund was state champion in the long jump.

Gast also wants to focus more on the 400-meter race this season.

“I want to try to bring my time down from last year by at least two or three seconds,” said Gast, who ran a PR of 52.5 seconds in the state finals of the 4x400-meter relay

“My goals this year are to improve my times from last year in every event. My overall goal will be to make state in the open 400 and maybe the sprint medley, if we get one together.”

Expectations are also high for Gast after winning a state title as only a freshman.

“It’s very cool having a state title

under my belt, but it does add pressure,” said Gast. “I think people will put a target on my back just because I did win.”

However, he feels the title also gives him the upper hand in meets this season.

I’ve ran in the biggest race at the biggest stage already, so now every race at a normal meet will seem like nothing,” he said. “It will really help me relax and calm the nerves.”

Meyer plans to compete in the shuttle hurdle relay, the 110-meter hurdles, and the high jump, and possibly try some 400-meter races.

“My biggest goals for this year is to make it back to state in one of my events, PR in all of my events, and make it to Drake,” said Meyer.

Head track coach Daniel Knipfel looks for new relay teams to be formed this season.

“I do look for our state track returners from last season, Charlie Huesmann, Colby Gast, Mason Badtram, Caden Meyer, to most likely play an influential role in putting together tough relays,” said Coach Knipfel, who said success will ultimately depend on who goes out and how healthy everybody stays throughout the season.

“I would say our sprints will see some success in the 100-meter, 200-meter,

and 400-meter,” said Coach Knipfel. “I expect our distance boys to improve on their individual times, and several of our field events will see some PR’s throughout the season.”

After the state title in May, Coach Knipfel has seen a spark of interest in track for the boys.

“There are several athletes currently on the boys’ team that have expressed continued interest in the sport after last season,” he said. “I am hoping the interest stays in track for years to come.”



Photo by Zachary Pearlman
Senior Charles Huesmann competes at the state meet in May.

Rockow seeks back-to-back state appearances



Senior Collier Rockow takes a stroke during a golf meet last year.

By Gus Thoma

A Durant senior is looking to make back-to-back appearances at the state golf meet while a junior girl is hoping to qualify

for the first time.

After placing ninth in the state golf meet last year, senior Collier Rockow vows to return and finish in the top three.

Rockow said he feels very confident going into this season.

“I am putting in work over the off-season to get even better,” said Rockow, who has been mostly working on his short game.

“I am always looking to improve, but my main focus in the off-season has been 100 yards,” said Rockow. “I am one of the farthest hitters [but] 100 yards and in can help to shoot lower scores.”

Rockow expects nothing less than qualifying for state a second time.

“I feel pressure after how I ended the year last year, but I also felt it last year because I knew what I could accomplish,” said Rockow.

In an effort to get more boys out for the sport, Rockow has been trying to recruit some of the underclassmen.

“We always need more people out for golf. It’s a great sport that you can play your whole life, and it’s a ton of fun,” said Rockow.

The leader for the girls’ team, junior Lauren Callison, was only a couple strokes short from the state meet her freshman year but failed to advance last year as a sopho-

more.

Just like Rockow, Callison will not settle for anything less than state this season.

“I’m not going to lie, that was one of the worst feelings I’ve had playing golf,” said Callison. “I felt like I really let myself down and couldn’t compete at the level I knew I could when it mattered most. After finishing first at regionals, I had expectations to go to state, and I fell short.”

During the off-season, Callison got private lessons and participated in some Junior PGA tournaments. One of the more recognizable ones was the John Deere Classic Junior Open at TPC Deere Run,

“That was the hardest course I have ever had to play on,” said Callison. “I’m not going to lie, my performance was not great, but I managed to get a few birdies. It was a memorable experience, no matter the scores I had.”

Last year, Callison was the only golfer on the girls’ team with any high school experience, so she had to take charge of the team and lead, but this year there are four golfers on the team with experience, so she will have help with teaching the younger golfers.

Callison has also been encouraging girls in lower grades to give golf a shot.

“I have been encouraging a bunch

of girls to try and go out for golf this season. There are some underclassmen who will be joining the team and one junior,” said Callison.

“There are some new golfers on the team this year; building their golf IQ and basic skills will be a main focus for the upcoming season,” said Callison.

Lauren’s older brothers Logan and Lucas, who played on the boys’ golf team, had their senior season cut short due to COVID-19, so their last year was their junior season.

“That is kind of emotional because I couldn’t imagine this being my last season,” said Callison.

“It’s really unfortunate for them because they no doubt could’ve made it to state. So I wouldn’t say that it motivates me to play for them but just makes me realize that not everything is guaranteed. I need to play like this could be my last season and not take it for granted.”

For that reason, this season Callison has her goals set high for herself.

“This season, I’m going to have to work very hard to achieve my goals,” said Callison.

“I want to make it to state and place in the conference meet. Every meet I will be looking to get first place.”

Durant girls’ track team seeks return to blue oval after loss of key performer

By Lauren Callison

Without graduate Carlie Jo Fusco, a key runner in each of the 2023 state-qualifying relays, members of the Durant girls’ track team still have a trip in sight to the blue oval of Drake Stadium in Des Moines.

Last season, the 4x400-meter relay finished 15th at the state meet, and the shuttle hurdle relay finished 13th. Fusco also finished runner-up in the 100-meter hurdles and sixth in the 400-meter hurdles.

Head track Coach Doug Frett thinks there are plenty of leaders on the team to fill the shoes of an athlete with a caliber like Fusco, who is now running at the University of Northern Iowa.

“We will trust our system to have the next group of leaders step up and lead by example, just like Carlie did the last couple of years,” said Coach Frett.

“We have many talented athletes who are returning and many new girls who want to reach the ultimate goal of participating at the state level.”

The returning runners for the 4x400-meter relay are junior Emma Meincke, senior Isabelle DeLong, and senior Kennedy Schumacher.

DeLong and fellow seniors Lainey Shelangoski and Macy Huston will return for the shuttle hurdle relay. Shelangoski was the only runner besides Fusco to compete individually at the state meet last year. She finished 12th in the 400-meter hurdles and 22nd in the 100-meter hurdles.

This year, she expects to bring home some hardware.

“I wasn’t that far from taking home a medal last year; my goal is to bring home a medal,” said Shelangoski.

Junior Mariah Alpen was an alternate at the state meet in the shuttle hurdle relay but is expected to step up to fill Fusco’s spot.

Alpen ran with the team at a couple meets but ultimately was not chosen to run at state. As she was starting to improve her times, she fell over a hurdle while running at a home meet last season.

“Falling while hurdling definitely put up a mental block for me last season,” said Alpen. “It affected my performance as my times got longer after I fell.”

Alpen said she became “very timid” in races after falling.

“I remember telling myself to jump higher because I was nervous to fall again, but jumping higher adds more to my time,” she said.

Schumacher, the opening leg of the

4x400-meter relay last year, has been working hard in the off-season to secure a path to state for the relay and potentially qualify in the open 400 meter race.

“I think the 4x4 has potential to qualify,” said Schumacher. “I also see other relays with the potential to qualify. The group of girls that have potential to qualify in a relay together will qualify, but in which relay is to be determined,” she said.

Schumacher suffered a quad injury less than two weeks before the district meet last season and went into “damage-control.”

That feeling of knowing she could have competed better has motivated her for her last season.

“I can confidently say I am the strongest I have ever been going into a season,” she said. “I’m ready to give it my all for my last season.”