

# Track teams look to return to state meet

## Girls’ track

By Lauren Callison

Senior Carlie Jo Fusco represents the best hope for a state title in girls’ track since Alyssa (Williams) Jackson won the 3000-meter run in 2016.

Last year at state, Fusco finished fourth in the 400-meter hurdles with a time of 1:05.43, a personal record for her. Only one girl who finished ahead of her in last year’s state meet returns this year.

“I definitely have my goals set since the last state track meet,” said Fusco. “There’s one person in between me and the finish line as of how stats go from last year’s 400-meter hurdles race that I competed in.”

That being said, Fusco has been putting in the work in the off-season in order to have a successful season again. She has been practicing three times a week since Nov. 1 for her club track team, Iowa Speed Elite of Iowa City.

“As it has been closer to the season, I have been competing in indoor meets in Chicago, Dubuque, Minnesota, and am looking at making it to nationals on March 10 as my biggest goal,” said Fusco.

Before the track season had even started, she and other track members met every Friday to work on their technique.

Practice started earlier this week, and the first indoor track meet is on March 6 at the University of Northern Iowa where Fusco has already committed to run next year as a freshman in college.

She feels much more relaxed already having her college track career laid out.

“My times have been improving over the off-season; some other colleges have reached out, and it makes me wonder if I should have waited,” said Fusco. “But I have no regrets about UNI. I think it’s a really great place and team.”

Fusco competes at a high level and helps her team achieve that level as well, according to Head Coach Doug Frett. Last year, Fusco was in all three events that Durant ran at the state meet.

“We also have many girls with state

experience from the last couple of years who will also push each other to work hard, so they can return to state,” said Coach Frett.

The 800-meter sprint medley team qualified last year with graduate Shannon Head, junior Isabelle DeLong, sophomore Emma Meincke and Fusco. They finished 22nd with a time of 1:56.73.

The shuttle hurdle relay team also qualified for the second year in a row. Graduate Elizabeth Daufeldt, junior Macy Huston, junior Lainey Shelangoski, and Fusco competed and finished seventh.

In the preliminary heat, the Wildcats ran a time of 1:09.67 and qualified for the final heat.

In the finals, they ran a time of 1:11.10. Team members were ecstatic when they heard they had made it to the finals.

“Our reaction to finding out we made it is one of my favorite memories ever,” said Fusco.

That state performance has set the bar high for the three of the four members returning this season.

“We all want more of that feeling, and I think that alone makes us that much more confident and competitive coming into this season,” said Fusco.

Huston has set her goals since her state appearance last year as well.

“I’m pushing myself to qualify again this year for shuttle hurdles and place higher than we did last year,” said Huston.

Huston would also like to set a personal record this year in the 100-meter hurdles and qualify for state.

The Durant girls’ track team has always performed well in hurdles.

“I think that we perform well [in hurdles] because we are lucky to have our Assistant Coach Julie Keppy [who ran hurdles in high school] to help us improve,” said Huston.

The shuttle hurdle relay team will be missing Daufeldt, who graduated, and the 800-meter sprint medley will be missing Head, also a graduate.

A total of six seniors graduated last year, so it is vital to have the underclassmen

step up and fill their shoes.

“Many girls will be asked to try different events than what they want to do. Hopefully that is enough motivation to put in the extra work,” said Coach Frett.

## Boys’ track

By Isabelle DeLong

Three of the five runners who ran at state last season are returning and ready to get back to the blue oval at Drake University in Des Moines.

Last year, the boys’ team sent three events to state.

The 4x400-meter relay team, consisting of seniors Nolan DeLong and Garrett Hollenback, junior Charles Huesmann, and graduate Drake Shelangoski, placed fifth.

The 4x200-meter relay team, which featured DeLong, Hollenback, Huesmann, and graduate Carter Wichelt, placed 10th.

Lastly, DeLong qualified in the 100-meter dash, placing 17th.

With DeLong and Hollenback being seniors this year, they plan to end their careers with a state title.

“It has been a goal of mine since the start of my track career in high school, and I feel that we have a really good chance this year,” said DeLong.

Hollenback and DeLong qualified in the 4x400-meter relay two seasons ago as well. Durant placed fifth both times.

Hollenback is using both state outcomes as fuel to motivate him for this season.

“What is fueling us most is knowing that we can do it because we’ve placed fifth twice, and we know where we are compared to the returning runners from other teams,” said Hollenback.

DeLong is also using last year’s state results to motivate him for this upcoming year.

“I am a big competitor, and most people know that; it doesn’t matter what it is, I’m always competing,” said DeLong.

“I don’t like to lose, so I use my previous losses to fuel me for my next competitive encounters.”

Huesmann was a key contributor to both state relays as just a sophomore, but he wasn’t nervous during the meet.

“I wasn’t surprised at all that I was able to contribute to the state relays team because I was confident in my athletic ability,” said Huesmann, who has set his goals even higher this season.

“My goals for this season are to qualify for three events at state this year,” said Huesmann.

“I plan on running the 4x400, the sprint medley, and the open 800.”

DeLong is looking forward to having fun his senior season but also working



Photo by Kylie Meyermann

Junior Macy Huston competes in the shuttle hurdle relay.

hard to reach his personal and team goals.

“I plan to run the open 100, sprint medley, 4x400, and open 200 most likely,” said DeLong.

“My goal is to have fun. With it being my senior year, this is my last year to enjoy running with my guys. As much as I want it to be fun, though, it is going to be hard work because we have big goals in mind!”

Hollenback is also excited for the season and is ready to work hard to reach his goals.

“I plan on running the sprint med, 4x4 and possibly the open 400,” said Hollenback. “My goal is to end with a state championship in the 4x4 and beat the school record.”

Coach Daniel Knipfel is looking forward to getting back to work with the returning team members and the upcoming freshmen as well.

“My expectations for returners is to set new goals and improve upon last year,” said Coach Knipfel.

“I never want athletes to be complacent. I also look forward to seeing new talent on the team this season.”

Coach Knipfel has been happy about the number of 400-meter runners he has had in the past few years.

“The 4x400 is the longest sprint relay in high school, and we have been fortunate the past four years to have athletes buy into the training and desire to compete at that event,” said Coach Knipfel.

“The more 400-meter runners I have, the better.”

Sophomore Race Starr was two places off of making it to the state cross country meet this year, and Coach Knipfel is excited to see how well he does this season in the distance events.

“We didn’t have many distance runners last season,” he said. “It will be fun to see how much he has grown since last season.”

Knipfel also thinks he has a few throwers who will be successful.

“[Senior] Brady Meincke had some big throws in the discus last season, throwing over 130 feet,” said Coach Knipfel.

“I think several of our underclassmen will make some big gains as well. In the shot put, [junior] Nic Poston and [senior] Hunter Bacorn will also be promising. Both have gotten stronger and quicker in the off-season.”


Another event that is looking promising is junior Caden Meyer in the high jump.

“Caden has developed great technique the past two years,” said Coach Knipfel.

“I can see him regularly jump 6’0-6’2” throughout the season.”


Overall, Coach Knipfel believes the season can go very well for the boys as long as everyone buys in.

“I think the season will go as well as the team wants it to go,” he said.





### Arty's Ice Cream and Grill's boys' track athlete of the month

Junior Nicholas Poston will be competing in the shot put and discus for the Wildcats this season. Poston enjoys competing in track because he loves the team energy, and it keeps him active. His goal for the season is to PR in the shot and get into more running events. Poston is also planning on running the 4x100-meter relay for shot put and discus throwers.




Poston

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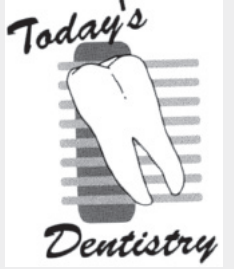
### Peel's Inc. golfer of the month

Senior Elliott Fortin is golfing for the third year in a row. His personal record for nine holes is 44, and his 18-hole record is 94. This season he hopes to shoot par in at least one meet and golf consistently under 40 for nine holes. Next year, he hopes to play golf at Kirkwood.




Fortin

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### Today's Dentistry coach of the month

Mr. Doug Frett has been coaching since the summer of 1992 after he graduated college. He is currently coaching seventh grade boys' basketball and varsity girls' track. Coach Frett says, "I started coaching, so I could continue to enjoy sports. I was a multi-sport athlete in high school and wanted to be able to pass on what I knew to the next generation." He is also a junior high instructor at Durant.



Frett

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### Apex Ink and Apparel's girls' track athlete of the month



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Junior Kennedy Schumacher will be running varsity track for the Wildcats this spring. She plans to compete in the 200 and 400-meter races and the 4x400-meter relay. "I am beyond excited for this season and excited to see everything come together," she said.



Schumacher