

Atlanta star runner Kester blazes field in 3,200 final

Greater Atlanta Christian's Lauren Kester dominates the Class AA field and wins the 3,200 at Hugh Mills Stadium on Thursday.

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ALBANY — The field opened for Greater Atlanta Christian's Lauren Kester in the GHSA Class AA 3,200.

And that's putting it mildly.

The sophomore pulled away, sometimes leading the field by a half-track distance and won the state crown with a time of 11 minutes, 41.09 seconds.

While winning, Kester kept defending champion Rachel Greenwell, among others, from even coming close. And although her winning time was more than 20 seconds off her best time, it was good enough amid pleasant weather in Southwest Georgia this time of the year.

"That's what I planned, to dominate the race from the beginning," Kester said.

Having such a big lead halfway through the race, the only concern left was her burning out, enabling the field to catch up with her.

"I thought about that at first," Kester said of the eight-lap race. "But when I got to the mile marker, I knew I had a good chance at winning."

Lovett's Elizabeth Rucker was second (12:03.39), followed by Central, Macon's Astacia Watkins (12:03.43) and Greenwell (12:18.30).

Thursday's meet also was a measure of revenge for Kester, who was passed near the end of last year's state final by Greenwell.

"It's just good to win," Kester said.

PLENTY OF DEPTH: North Oconee is the defending state champion, winning last year's state crown thanks primarily to three athletes: Rachel Greenwell and her twin, Rebecca, in distance events, along with Autumn Moser in the triple jump.

This year, although first-year coach Kali Baker's team is tied for fourth in Class AA with five points after Day 1, she still likes her team's chances of repeating because of the increased depth from last season.

"It's good to know that just in case someone doesn't come through in their events, there is someone else to step up in another event," Baker said.

Greater Atlanta Christian leads AA with 10 points, followed by Lovett (8), Central, Macon (6) and Bleckley County and North Oconee tied for fourth with 5 apiece.

Riverwood leads AAA with 10 points, followed by St. Pius X (8), Oconee County (6), Flowery Branch (5) and Columbus (4). In AAAA, Lakeside, Evans leads with 13 points,

followed by Lakeside, DeKalb (10), Marist (6), Starr's Mill (4) and Glynn Academy (3). Brookwood leads AAAAA with 11 points, followed by Collins Hill (10), Chattahoochee (8), Walton (4) and Milton (3).

NICE DEBUT: Lakeside-DeKalb freshman Meghan Wetterhall captured the AAAA crown in the 3,200 with a time of 11:07.16. She said later the advice from her coaches was simple: Don't overdo it.

"They told me to stay on the shoulder of the leader and just make a move when I felt like I could," she said.

She did just that, passing Lakeside, Evans' Anna Bowles during the final 200 meters. And it was not until the second half of the eight-lap race that she even made her move to second.

"I just paced myself," she said.



Kester

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