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Sports

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Shrine's Harris has long-distance calling

State champion heading to University of Detroit Mercy.

The Daily Tribune Sports Staff

ROYAL OAK -- The odometer does not quit working for Alex Harris. It is merely changing locales.

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The Royal Oak Shrine senior who captured both the 1600 and 3200 runs at the MHSAA Division 4 state track and field meet earlier this month will be displaying his immense talent at the University of Detroit Mercy soon.

"I'm looking forward to it," said Harris. "He (coach Guy Murray) has a lot of experience and he is trying to build a solid distance team."

Coach Murray has landed a very, very solid performer. Harris is our Track and Field Athlete of the Year.

While both victories at the state meet were memorable, his win in the 3200 was remarkably dramatic.

"I got out in front, and I led the whole way," began Harris. "I was coming down the stretch and someone told me that I had it. I was sprinting, but I wasn't going all out. At 30 meters, I got passed."

The runner sneaking past was Tim Jagielski of Waldron. The two have history. Jagielski was the only runner to beat Harris at last fall's state cross country meet.

"We did the sprinter's lean and I beat him," said Harris. "It felt good. He'd beaten me in cross country and I really did not expect to win both the 3200 and the 1600."

Harris finished in 9 minutes, 51.10 seconds. Jagielski finished an eye tic back at 9:51.11.

In the 1600, Harris' 4:22.04 was five seconds better than anyone else.

"I had run the 1600 at the Oakland County meet this year and I ran a 4:23 to finish second behind Anthony Wile of Brother Rice. Even though I was two seconds back, it gave me confidence that I could run at that pace. I went into the state meet feeling very confident," said Harris.

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Royal Oak Shrine coach Wright Wilson can say with confidence that Harris is one of the most talented runners he has coached.

Harris did not run cross country as a freshman, and even his track and field season that year was hampered by injury problems. His top times as a ninth-grader were a 6:00 mile, and a 13:30 in the two mile.

"Alex became a lot more serious as a runner as a sophomore," said Wilson. "He joined the cross country team for the first time and the rapid progression began. Alex became a model for off-season workouts. He ran in the winter and the following summer, and now a lot of our other runners are emulating him. They have seen what hard work can do."

Harris' 4:22.1 in the 1600 is a school record. His best in the 3200 is 9:46.9.

He's a Catholic League champion in three events; the 800, 1600 and 3200. During his career, he won six Catholic League championships and six regional championships. He qualified for the state track meet three years.

Harris was sixth in the 3200 at the state meet as a junior. In cross country, he was second this past season and fourth as a junior. His best time in the 5k was 16:14.

"My mom and dad both went to the University of Detroit," said Harris. "My dad ran there, too."

His mom and dad are Anita and Todd. He has two younger sisters, Teresa, who will be a junior at Shrine, and Olivia, who will be in the sixth grade.

"They are both runners," said Wright excitedly.

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