



Thursday, April 10, 2008

City: Tucson  
State: AZ  
Section: Sports  
Page: 4C  
From:  
Source: Citizen Staff Writer  
Edition:  
Publication: Tucson Citizen

TC VARSITY

### **From gridiron to track field**

Star defenders rely on technique in discus, shot put

CHRISTOPHER VECK

sports@tucsoncitizen.com

As football teammates, they went after the quarterback.

On the track and field team, they go after each other.

Senior Ben Swarts and junior Jake Fischer, star defensive players on Ironwood Ridge's football team in the fall, compete against each other in the shot put and discus in the spring, pushing each other to become arguably southern Arizona's best throwing tandem.

"They are friends. They support each other 100 percent. There is absolutely no animosity," Ironwood Ridge track and field coach Gary Forrest said. "But there is no question they are very competitive. Ben wants to beat

Jake; Jake wants to beat Ben. And when one throws well, the other does, also."

Swarts, a defensive lineman, knows the competition keeps the two focused.

"Neither of us likes to lose, so we always try hard to win," Swarts said. "There are no negatives. It's always positive, but we are always competitive."

With their toughest competition most weeks being themselves, the duo works hard to keep each other motivated.

"It's a lot harder to get hyped up for a meet when it's going against the same guy you practice against," said Fischer, a linebacker. "We learn to work together. We know each other's strengths and weaknesses."

The friendly competition brings the best out of each.

"When someone gets a really good throw, and it's usually Ben, I always try to match it," Fischer said. "And when I do, he gets pushed to do better."

The two use track to stay competitive and in shape during the football offseason.

"They compete in the weight training (during track), which (coach Gary) Minor loves as a football coach, and the drudgery of the weight room is balanced with the competitiveness of throwing," Forrest said.

Success on the football field doesn't automatically translate to success in the spring. Forrest said Swarts and Fischer are leaner than typical throwers and, despite being muscular football players, aren't so much so that they've lost the flexibility needed to excel in track and field.

"You wouldn't suspect that they could throw a discus (so far) by looking at them, but they can because of technique," said Forrest.

He credited both athlete's techniques to previous coaches.

Swarts attended Flowing Wells High School his junior season, and Fischer was coached by Jim Anders at Ironwood Ridge.

"They are great guys and get along with people well, and everybody appreciates the fact that a lot of the success we have on the track team will be because of them," Forrest said.

Both have passed qualifying marks for the Class 5A Division II state championship meet later this spring in the shot put (minimum qualifying distance of 48 feet, 5.5 inches) and discus (138-6).

"We just learn to stay patient, get back up," Fischer said. "There is always another throw."