

Women's Track Looks To Further Dominance At Championships

Posted: Wednesday, March 1, 2006

EAU CLAIRE - The UW-Eau Claire women's track team heads to the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) Indoor Track and Field Championships in Stevens Point Friday and Saturday in hopes of continuing its unbeaten streak.

The Blugolds have yet to be beaten by any team through five meets on the year. That makes for first place finishes at the Blugold Open, the Whitewater Invite, the Warren Bowlus Open, the Border Battle and the Blue Devil Open. The team is ranked second in the nation for Division III behind UW-Oshkosh.

The reigning national pole vault champion, **Stephanie Barnes** (*Jr.-Sauk City/Sauk Prairie*), also took first in the pole vault at the WIAC Championships last year with a 12-foot jump. Barnes prepares to defend her title and so far this season has the highest jump in the conference at 3.89 meters (12'9"). This leap was an NCAA automatic qualifying display.

The Blugolds are not shabby in other areas of the field events. **Erin Kokta** (*Sr.-Brookfield/East*) has an NCAA provisional long jump of 5.50 meters (18'1/2"), which is fifth longest in the WIAC. She also holds the third best jump in the conference for the triple jump. She leapt 11.46 meters (37'7 1/4") for an NCAA provisional qualifying effort. Kokta looks to continue more success in the high jump, where she claimed the sixth best conference mark of 1.61 meters (5'3 1/4").

Another pole vaulter looks to add her success to the competition. **Alecia Ellingstad** (*Fr.-Eau Claire/Elk Mound*) has the eighth highest jump in the WIAC at 3.26 meters (10'8 1/4").

Paula Crossfield (*Jr.-Madison/East*) has excelled in the shot put and weight throw this season. In the conference, she has the sixth farthest shot put toss at 11.95 meters (39'2 1/2") and the seventh best weight throw at 14.41 meters (47'3 1/2").

The track aspect of the team looks very good as well. In the 55-meter dash **Kelly Sprague** (*Jr.-Mankato, MN/East*) ran the sixth fastest race at 7.45 in the conference for the season. Kokta is four spots behind her with a 7.51 time.

Liz Faller (*Jr.-Marinette*) is the fastest WIAC competitor in the 55-meter hurdles this season with a NCAA provisional qualifying time of 8.40. She finished fourth in that race in the championships last year with an 8.60 run.

Liz Kooistra (*Fr.-Lakeville, MN*) also holds the fastest time in an event for the conference this season. Her 57.28 400-meter dash claimed an NCAA provisional qualification. **Sarah Stirdivant** (*Doylestown, PA/Central Bucks W.*) has the ninth best time in the 400-meter race with a 59.80 effort. These two have found success in the 800-meter run as well. Kooistra holds the fifth best time in the conference at 2:18.53, while teammate Stirdivant is behind her at eighth with a 2:21.14 time.

Last year **Christina Locke** (*Jr.-Racine/Horlick*) took sixth in the mile run in 5:12.32 at the WIAC championships while this year she has ran the 10th best WIAC mile at 5:20.10.

As for other distance races, **Molly Warner** (*So.-Mosinee*) is fourth in the 3000-meter run with a 10:26.06 race and fifth in the 5000-meter run with a 17:55.75 mark. **Jane-Marie Ovanin** (*Sr.-Amherst*) is two spots behind Warner in the 5000-meter event at 18:25.82.

Last year the team finished fifth in the indoor championships and sent two people to nationals, pole vault specialist Barnes and also Jen Staflien.

This year's events begin 9:00 a.m. Friday and 10:00 a.m. Saturday in Stevens Point.