

Ten Blugolds Qualified For NCAA Track Nationals

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Ten UW-Eau Claire athletes have qualified for the NCAA Division III Outdoor Track and Field Championships which will be contested at Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois Thursday through Saturday.

The Blugold women's team will send one of its largest contingents ever to the nationals with nine athletes who are entered in eight individual events and one relay. One male athlete has qualified.

Heading the list of Blugold qualifiers is junior **Steph Barnes** (*Sauk City/Sauk Prairie*), the defending national indoor and outdoor pole vault champion. She enters the competition ranked second in the country with her school-record effort of 12 feet, 11 inches. North Central College's Megan Rossi has cleared 13-1.5 this season. Last year, Barnes won the national title in a three-person jump off with a height of 12-2.5.

Also qualified in individual events are junior **Liz Faller** (*Marinette*), senior **Erin Kokta** (*Brookfield/East*), senior **Brooke Schmidt** (*Rice Lake/Stanley-Boyd*), junior **Paula Crossfield** (*Madison/East*), sophomore **Molly Warner** (*Mosinee*) and freshman **Liz Kooistra** (*Lakeville, MN*).

The Blugold 1600-meter relay is also qualified. That unit includes Faller, Kooistra, freshman **Laura Broner** (*Madison/Memorial*) and junior **Shalene Huth** (*Appleton/West*).

Faller, who helped extend the Blugolds' domination of the 100-meter hurdles in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference championships with a fifth consecutive title, is ranked sixth in the country with her 14.41 clocking, which is just shy of Jen Stafslie's school record of 14.27.

Kokta, who won the long jump at both the WIAC indoor and outdoor meets, is ranked ninth in that event with a leap of 18-11.25. She also will compete in the triple jump where she is ranked 13th with a 38-5.5 effort.

Schmidt and Crossfield are both qualified in the discus where they have thrown 143-3 and 142-1, respectively, to rank 10th and 14th. Schmidt is looking for her first All-American honors in track after earning first team All-American recognition in volleyball and winning the WIAC rebound championship two successive years in basketball.

Kooistra, who earned All-Conference recognition in soccer last fall as she helped the Blugolds to their first-ever NCAA appearance, will run the 400-meter dash, an event in which she set the school record both indoors and outdoors this season. She is ranked 11th nationally. She also will anchor the 4x4 relay.

Warner won the conference 10,000-meter race this year and has been the top Blugold finisher in all but two cross country races during her first two seasons. She was one of the final qualifiers in the 10K with a time of 37:07.21.

Matt Crosby (*Fr.-Glenwood City*) is a hurdle specialist but qualified in the decathlon with the 18th best score. He placed third in the conference meet where he won the shot put and placed second in the hurdles in the decathlon competition.

Competition in the three-day national meet gets underway Thursday morning with the first five events of the decathlon. The first individual event is the women's pole vault.

2006 NCAA Division III Outdoor Track and Field Championships Website

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