

Kooistra's Record Performance Honored By WIAC

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MADISON, Wis. - UW-Eau Claire senior **Liz Kooistra** (*Lakeville, Minn.*) has been honored by the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference as the women's outdoor track athlete of the week for her record-setting performance last Saturday in the Kansas Relays.

Kooistra, who is also the reigning WIAC player of the year in soccer, outlasted a field of 32 participants to win the 400-meter dash in 55.12 seconds which bettered her preliminary time of 55.95 seconds and also bested her school record standard of 55.68 seconds set in last year's NCAA Division III outdoor track and field championships where she placed fourth.

The field for the 400 at the prestigious Kansas Relays included 17 Division I runners plus five Division II athletes and six Division III runners. Four of the entrants were NAIA or junior college competitors. According to head coach Chip Schneider, Kooistra came from behind in the final 100 meters to beat Butler County Community College's Dominique Maloney by 45/100ths of a second. She also finished nearly a second in front of Wartburg's Hannah Baker who had beaten Kooistra in this year's NCAA Division III indoor national championships as the two finished second and third.

To put Kooistra's performance into perspective, the WIAC outdoor track championships record is 55.45 seconds. The stadium record at Marietta College, Ohio where the Division III outdoor nationals will take place is 57.63. Kooistra is the only athlete that has an automatic qualifying time for nationals in the 400 and it is 95/100ths of a second faster than the second-best time. Since 1982, seven Division III 400-meter national champions have won with a time slower than Kooistra's 55.12 clocking. A 55.12 time would have tied for fifth in last year's Big Ten outdoor track championships.

When Kooistra arrived at Eau Claire, the school record was 57.22 seconds set by Breanna McMullen in 2002. Kooistra began her assault on the school record already her freshman season, lowering the mark three times to 56.29. Since that 2006 season, she has taken another 1.17 seconds off the record. She will compete in the nationally-acclaimed Drake Relays this weekend, but only in two relay events and not the open 400, according to Schneider.

At the Kansas Relays, Kooistra also ran the anchor leg of the 4x400 relay team which qualified for the finals and finished eighth.

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