

Track Teams Prepare for Indoor Nationals

by Taylor Wilson, BYU Athletic Communications



Mindy McClurkin will compete in the 200m and long jump.
BYU Photo/Mark Philbrick

PROVO, Utah (March 9, 2010) – Seven members of the No. 20 BYU women’s track and field team will be headed to Fayetteville, Arkansas this weekend to compete in the NCAA Indoor National Championships in six total events.

“We just want to do as good as we can,” head coach Craig Poole said. “We can not predict what will happen, so were hoping we can perform well. We are not the top seed in any events, but I think we still have a good opportunity to be successful.”

Senior Mindy McClurkin will lead the way for the Cougars, competing in the long jump and the 200-meter dash. McClurkin is currently ranked ninth in the 200-meters with a time of 23.34 and tenth in the long jump at 6.44m (21’1.5”).

“I feel very strongly that Mindy can place in both her events,” Poole said. “I think she can really surprise some people in the 200-meters especially.”

The 800-meter race looks to be the strength of the BYU lineup, with three women competing in the event. Defending National Champion Lacey Cramer looks to defend her title and is currently ranked eighth, while sophomore Nachele Stewart and senior Angela Wagner will also look to score points in the event.

2009 National Champion Amy Otis will also look to defend her title in the pentathlon. Otis competed in the pentathlon for the first time all season in the MWC Indoor Championships and scored 4053 points, just enough to rank her in the top ten nationally.

Freshman Rachel Brooke Fisher also did not automatically qualify for Nationals until the final MWC meet. Fisher vaulted to victory while breaking the BYU pole vault record at 4.25m (13'11.25"), and secured her chance to compete for a National Championship.

"Rachel had a breakthrough at the conference championships, and we really think she can keep that going through this weekend," Poole said.

The final event the BYU women will participate in is the distance medley relay, composed of Natalie Stewart, Nachele Stewart, Cramer and Wagner. BYU placed third in this event at last year's Indoor Nationals, and hope to improve on that record time this year.

On the men's side, junior Leif Arrhenius will represent BYU at nationals in the weight throw. Arrhenius, the Mountain West Conference champion in both the weight throw and the shot put, finished the indoor season with the 13th-best distance in the nation at 20.91 meters.

Arrhenius took All-American honors last year in the weight, finishing eleventh overall.

"He's throwing very well right now," said BYU men's coach Mark Robison. "I think he has a very good chance to be for sure All-American but also to finish in the top five. He's been so consistent."

Nine other Cougars provisionally qualified for the final meet, including Nathan Ogden in the 5,000 meters, but each cutoff came too soon. Ogden appeared to have qualified after the MWC Championships, but last week was knocked out when another athlete qualified at one of the last chance invitationals held around the country.

"It's very frustrating," Robison said. "But we will be that much more aggressive in outdoors and do much better there."

The meet is scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m. MST on Friday with the men's heptathlon 60-meter dash and will conclude at 7:40 p.m. MST on Saturday with the women's 1600-meter relay.

ESPN360.com will stream the championships live beginning at 7:00 p.m. CST on Fri., March 12 and 5:10 p.m. MST on Sat., March 13. NCAA.com and ArkansasRazorbacks.com will stream supplemental coverage as available when ESPN360.com is not live. Live results can be found at ArkansasRazorbacks.com.

Athlete	Event
Leif Arrhenius	weight throw
Lacey Cramer	800-meters, DM Relay
Rachel Brooke Fisher	pole vault
Mindy McClurkin	long jump, 200-meter dash
Amy Otis	pentathlon
Nachele Stewart	800-meters, DM Relay
Natalie Stewart	distance medley relay
Angela Wagner	800-meters, DM Relay