

MEN'S PREVIEW

Q: WHAT WILL BE THE STRENGTHS OF THE MEN'S TEAM THIS SEASON?

A: We'll be a fairly well-rounded team once again. We have solid performers in every flat event on the track from 100-meter dash to the 10,000-meter run; plus a talented new high hurdler and the best relay personnel we've had in my tenure at USAFA. With the possible exception of the high jump and the hammer throw, the same can be said about the eight field events. And of course, the combined events (heptathlon indoors, decathlon outdoors) will be ably manned by a terrific corps of athletes as well.

Q: HOW WILL THE SPRINTERS AND HURDLERS FARE AGAINST THE MWC?

A: Junior **Travis Picou** (Spring Valley, Calif.) will give us a sprinter who should be competitive against the best in the conference and qualify for NCAA Championships again both indoor (200-meter dash) and outdoor (100-meter dash, 200-meter dash). He has won three MWC titles (two indoor, one outdoor) in the 200-meter dash and qualified for the NCAA Championships last year during both the indoor and outdoor seasons. He is looking stronger than ever.

Senior **Nick Luina** (Yorktown, Va.) has been extremely reliable in the 400-meter dash, placing in the top four in the conference at his last three championship meets. He is also a terrific team leader. He'll be joined at 400 meters by juniors **Kyle Meakins** (Salt Lake City, Utah), who really came on at the end of last season, and **Troy Jensen** (Santa Ana, Calif.), who is returning from a church mission after placing fifth at the 2004 outdoor championships.

We've added several newcomers to our sprint crew as well. Although they may be a year or two away from impacting the MWC finish, they've added some needed depth for relay purposes. Sprint coach **Ron White** and I are using a new training approach with our sprinters, using the Baylor program as a guide, and our results this past fall have been extremely encouraging. I believe our sprinters will have a terrific season.

The high hurdles were a weakness for us last year, but the addition of sophomore **Kellen Curry** (Midwest City, Okla.) gives us a potential MWC all-conference performer. Junior **John Payne** (Tupelo, Miss.) is a potential scorer in the 400-meter intermediate hurdles, and will be capably backed by several newcomers with promise in the long hurdle race.

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE RELAY EVENTS?

A: I'm really excited about our potential in the relays! I believe we may have 4x100-meter and 4x400-meter relay teams capable of breaking longstanding school records. In the sprint medley, which we'll run only at the Drake Relays, we're capable of placing high and being among the top 10 teams in the country once all of the relay meets are concluded.

Q: IS THIS TEAM AS TALENTED IN THE DISTANCE EVENTS AS PAST FALCON TEAMS?

A: Based on our success in cross country last fall (where the Falcons finish second at the MWC meet), I believe that we can score every bit as many points at the conference level as past teams.

Distance coach **Mark Stanforth** always does an incredible job of having our distance runners at their peak for the MWC Outdoor Championships, the most important meet on our schedule. Junior **Kevin Hawkins** (Bonney Lake, Wash.) qualified for the NCAA Outdoor Championship meet last spring in the 800-meter run as just a sophomore, and should run even faster this season.

Senior **Richard Elmore** (Napa, Calif.) should threaten to make the USAFA All-Time Top-10 list in the indoor mile and outdoor 1500-meter run. Junior **Calvin Glass** (Antelope, Calif.) qualified for the NCAA Midwest Regional last spring in the 800-meter run and should be just as dangerous this season at 1500 meters.

Sophomore **Sebastian Ortiz** (Columbia, Pa.) was a nice surprise last season in the middle distance races, and we're expecting a lot from him this spring. Sophomore **Matt Williams** (Colorado Springs, Colo.) has terrific range from 1500 to 5000 meters, including the 3000-meter steeplechase. It's only a question of which race he chooses to specialize in to make an impact at the conference level.

California products, freshmen **Thomas Richter** (East Amherst, N.Y.) and **Austin Fritzsche** (Mount Shasta, Calif.), will both have a great opportunity to develop as upperclassmen.

In the longer distance races, a solid group of contributors to the Falcons' cross country success last fall will contribute. Junior **Josh Van Wyngaarden** (La Vista, Neb.) and senior **Jason Beck** (Cincinnati, Ohio) will join Matt Williams in making the steeplechase a deep event. At the 5000- and 10,000-meter distances, juniors **Ian McFarland** (West Plains, Mo.) and **Kenny Grosselin** (Ramstein AB, Germany), along with sophomores **Sean Houseworth** (Carlock, Ill.) and **Joe Curran** (Naperville, Ill.), should be relied on to score several places deep at the MWC Championships.

Q: HOW WILL THE FALCONS BE IN THE "JUMPS"?

A: We'll be vastly improved in the horizontal jumps - junior **Devin Hart** (Colorado Springs, Colo.) will be joined by football freshman **Brandon Lassiter** (Lawrence, Kan.) and local product **Brent Byrd** (Colorado Springs, Colo.) to make the Falcons highly competitive in the long and triple jumps. Sophomore **Olufemi "Sam" Oke** (Houston, Texas) has been a nice surprise this fall and will compete here as well as in the short sprint races.

In the pole vault, junior **Erik Mirandette** (Kentwood, Mich.), returns from a church mission and humanitarian work in Africa where he suffered severe injuries in a terrorist bombing in Cairo, Egypt. He has had an outstanding fall of getting his technique and conditioning back. He will be joined by a terrific group of freshmen, led by **Nick Frawley** (Midlothian, Texas), the fifth-best high school senior in the country last spring, and **Myles McDowell** (Murrietta, Ga.).

Q: LAST SEASON THE FALCONS SCORED AN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF POINTS IN THE THROWS - CAN THEY DUPLICATE THOSE PERFORMANCES?

A: Senior **Bryan Jones** (Fort Walton Beach, Fla.) and junior **David Lissy** (Sandpoint, Idaho) both return for the Falcons in the shot put (with Lissy also throwing the discus). Senior **Matt Pinson** (Prosser, Wash.) made some great improvements last season to score in both the shot and hammer throws.

The most promising returnee, however, is sophomore **Kirk Devine** (Reading, Pa.), who can produce points in the shot, discus and hammer throws. Freshman **Dan Paladino** (Monroe, N.Y.), the fifth-best high school athlete in the U.S. last spring in the hammer throw, could immediately impact the Mountain West Conference.

Our javelin throwers, under the guidance of field events coach **Scott Irving**, have been one of our strengths over the past several years, and 2007 should be no exception. Seniors **Matt Schwandt** (Manhattan, Kan.) and **Marcus Wells** (Joseph, Ore.) should have banner years. Matt has had an injury-riddled three years yet has had phenomenal results in spite of overcoming several surgeries. Coach Irving believes he can score in the NCAA Championships this spring.

Q: CAN YOU COUNT ON POINTS AGAIN FROM THE COMBINED EVENTS?

A: Senior **Brian Walsh** (Redlands, Calif.) returns after a year in which he won the MWC heptathlon title (indoors) and advanced to the NCAA Championships as well, but was riddled by injuries during the outdoor season. This year, he looks to not only duplicate his indoor title, but expand it to an outdoor title as well.

He'll be joined by junior **Matt Gensic** (Fort Wayne, Ind.) and sophomore **Skylar Morgan** (Klamath Falls, Ore.), both of whom scored at the conference championship-level meet last season.

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Q: HOW DOES THE MOUNTAIN WEST CONFERENCE SHAPE UP FOR 2007?

A: BYU looks to again have a squad that can place in the top-10 at the NCAA Championships, but may not be as deep as a year ago. Nevertheless, on paper, we should be battling Colorado State and TCU for the Mountain West runner-up position, if not higher. CSU is exceptionally strong in the throws, while TCU dominates the conference sprints. After placing fourth at both the indoor and outdoor meets last year, we've definitely set our sights higher!

Q: WHAT OTHER MEETS HIGHLIGHT THE SCHEDULE?

A: Without question, the first-ever "Service Academy Classic" on March 31, at the Virginia Military Institute will be the highlight of our schedule, outside of the MWC Championships. It will be the first-ever opportunity to meet the majority of our sister service academies in the same competition - Army, VMI, Citadel and Coast Guard Academy will compete and the results of this meet will give us a great benchmark for the success of our program relative to other service academies.

WOMEN'S PREVIEW

Q: WHAT WILL BE THE STRENGTHS OF THE WOMEN'S TEAM THIS SEASON?

A: This team has the potential to be the best in USAFA history, relative to finish in the conference championships. Our strength will be our throwers, with exciting athletes in the shot put, discus and javelin. They are all capable of scoring in the Mountain West Conference and several have the ability to qualify for the NCAA Midwest Regionals and even the NCAA Championships.

We have several other MWC-level performers spread out across the 1500- and 5000-meter runs, the 100-meter hurdles, the pole vault and the combined events (indoor pentathlon, outdoor heptathlon).

Q: HOW WILL THE SPRINTERS AND HURDLERS FARE AGAINST THE MWC?

A: Senior **Ayana Floyd-James** (Vallejo, Calif.) is our top returning sprinter, and after three years plagued by injuries and illnesses, had a productive fall training program. We have little depth behind Ayana, but we're really encouraged by freshman **Rebecca Burditt** (Colorado Springs, Colo.) and think she may follow the sprinting career track of previous 400-meter sprinters like Katy Crow and Jami Hodge.

Senior **Dierra Poland** (Deptford, N.J.) broke the Falcons' 100-meter hurdles program record last spring with her 13.77 time and she should run even faster this season. Freshman **Nicole Elliott** (Colorado Springs, Colo.) has been a very pleasant surprise in the 100-meter hurdles as well. Senior **Kim Brady** (New Rochelle, N.Y.) leads our 400-meter hurdlers and we're looking for her to make an incursion on our all-time list in that event.

Junior **Deb Durey** (Manchester, Iowa) will return to both hurdle races, as well as the long jump. Big things are expected of her, now that she is going to dedicate herself to those events in 2007, after foregoing training for the heptathlon.

We have several freshmen - **Danielle McCarty** (South Beloit, Ill.), **Katie Avena** (Las Vegas, Nev.) and **Lauren McKinnon** (Haddam, Conn.) capable of producing good results in the 400-meter hurdles, but they may be splitting time in the combined event as well.

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE RELAY EVENTS?

A: Without any short sprint depth, the 4x100-meter relay will be a big challenge for us in 2007, and it's possible we will not field a team in that event for Mountain West Conference. By adding some middle distance runners, our 4x400-meter relay team may be the most promising it has been in a few years.

On the other hand, I'm really excited about our possibilities in the 4x100-meter shuttle hurdle relay, which we'll run just once - at the Drake Relays. With Dierra Poland, Deb Durey and heptathlete **Lindsay Bengard** (St. Louis, Mo.) returning from the team that would have set a school record last season except for a disqualification, and with the addition of one of our promising freshmen, we could not only set an Academy record, but rank in the top-10 in the nation for the season in that seldom run event.

Q: IS THIS TEAM AS TALENTED IN THE DISTANCE EVENTS AS PAST FALCON TEAMS?

A: We won't be as deep, but beginning with junior standout **Kelly Robinson** (Holt, Mich.), we have some promising young performers. Kelly is making progress towards erasing all of our program records in both the 800- and 1500-meter events, and is the top scoring track athlete we've ever had at the Division I conference-level.

Freshman **Alison Romanko** (North Bend, Ore.) is one of the most promising freshmen we have in the program. She's multi-talented in several events, ranging from the pole vault, to the long hurdles, to the 800-meter run, and possibly even up to 1500-meter run. The only question is where she wants to best utilize her talents. We believe she can score in the MWC already this season.

Freshman **Brittany Morreale** (Rancho Palo Verdes, Calif.) is the most promising long distance runner we've had in years, and may ultimately challenge some of Callie Calhoun's records in the 3000-, 5000- and 10,000-meter races. Junior **Kate Papenberg** (Red Lion, Pa.) has shown significant improvements over the previous two years, and could be a MWC scorer outdoors in the 3000m steeplechase. Freshmen **Katie Anderson** (Coon Rapids, Minn.) and **Sara Juback** (Eagle River, Alaska) are promising young middle distance and distance runners as well who will contribute over the coming seasons.

Q: HOW WILL THE FALCONS BE IN THE JUMPS?

A: I believe we'll be somewhat improved in the horizontal jumps. Senior **Casey Johnson** (Los Angeles, Calif.) has not been able to devote much time to training this past fall because of flying commitments, but she's established herself as one of the better triple jumpers in the Mountain West Conference, placing seventh at the 2006 indoor meet. Dierra Poland and Deb Durey will lead our long jumpers. I'm also excited with the efforts of freshmen **Madison Burgess** (Gunnison, Colo.) and **Danielle McCarty** (South Beloit, Ill.).

The pole vault has been our "flagship" event the past several years under the leadership of coach **Capt. Jake Gensic**, and 2007 could bring more great results. Senior **Becky Stone** (Danville, Calif.) and sophomore **Michelle Fryling** (Kentwood, Mich.) return for the Falcons. Most of the "buzz" this past fall has been about the dynamic duo of freshmen **Melissa Beerse** (Morrow, Ohio), and **Megan Miller** (Boca Raton, Fla.). Both cleared the 12-foot mark as high school athletes and have the potential to smash Ana Maria Ortega's school records during both the indoor and outdoor seasons.

Q: LAST SEASON, THE FALCONS FARED VERY WELL IN THE CONFERENCE IN THE THROWS. CAN THEY REPEAT THOSE PERFORMANCES?

A: Senior **Olivia Korte** (Seneca, Kan.) is simply the best shot put and discus thrower in USAFA history. Last season she qualified for and placed seventh in the NCAA Outdoor Championships in the discus. I think that 2007 should see her throw farther than ever. Coach Irving believes that freshman **Sara Neubauer** (Bottineau, N.D.) has every bit as much potential as Olivia, and may even score in the MWC this season in three events - shot put, discus and javelin throw! Heptathlete Dierra Poland is also a highly competitive shot putter, making the USAFA all-time list last season.

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Certainly the loss of two-time NCAA Champion and three-time MWC Champion, Dana Pounds, will be a big loss for the Falcons, but senior **Caitie Holliday** (Kalispell, Mont.) leads a bevy of good javelin throwers and is expected to throw farther than ever in 2007. Senior **Casey Bayne** (El Segundo, Calif.), sophomore **Yvonne Johnston** (Kennewick, Wash.) and promising freshman **Katie Weber** (Malta, Mont.) are all potential Mountain West Conference place-finishers and scorers.

Q: HOW ABOUT THE COMBINED EVENTS?

A: Academy record-holder Dierra Poland returns to compete in the indoor pentathlon, but will likely not contest the outdoor heptathlon, so that she can concentrate on the 100-meter hurdles. She'll be joined by senior Lindsay Bengard, who has had an outstanding fall in just her second year as a track and field athlete, after playing volleyball during her first two seasons at Air Force. We believe she'll climb high on both the pentathlon and heptathlon all-time lists.

Several freshmen will also try the combined events, led by Danielle McCarty, who has shown huge promise based on her fall training results. She'll be joined by classmates Katie Avena and Lauren McKinnon, both of whom competed in multiple events in high school and seem to have an aptitude for combined events.

Q: HOW DOES THE MOUNTAIN WEST CONFERENCE SHAPE UP FOR 2007?

A: The Mountain West Conference is stronger than ever. No fewer than four teams - BYU, Colorado State, San Diego State and TCU - have a chance to rank among the top 25 teams in the nation. Our goal is to score more points than ever at the conference championship meet and climb to fifth or sixth place. That would be a huge improvement, and rate us as the Air Force Academy's most successful women's sports program. I think that's realistic given the new talent our freshmen bring to us.

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE "SERVICE ACADEMY CLASSIC"?

A: This afore-mentioned competition on March 31 at VMI will be the highlight of the women's schedule, as well. However with our women, this championship meet has even more significance and importance, maybe even more than the MWC Championships, for two reasons. First, unlike the men's competition, all of our sister service academies - Army, Navy, VMI, Citadel and Coast Guard Academy - will compete. Second, this meet gives our women's program a more realistic chance to achieve a measure of success relative to other service academies versus the difficulty of being successful in the ultra-competitive Mountain West Conference. Our goal is obviously to win the competition, and that will be a huge challenge but not an unreasonable expectation.

2007 INDOOR SCHEDULE

JANUARY

- 13 **AF All-Comers Meet** **USAF Academy, Colo.**
- 19-20 Pole Vault Summit Reno, Nev.
- 20 Big 12/MWC Challenge Lincoln, Neb.
- 20 Nebraska Weslyn Open Lincoln, Neb.
- 27 **Don Barrett-Air Force Open** **USAF Academy, Colo.**

FEBRUARY

- 2-3 **Air Force Invitational** **USAF Academy, Colo.**
- 10 Husky Classic Seattle, Wash.
- 10 Albuquerque Invitational Albuquerque, N.M.
- 16 Robert Shine Invitational Laramie, Wyo.
- 22-24 MWC Championships Albuquerque, N.M.

MARCH

- 2-3 Alex Wilson Invitational South Bend, Ind.
- 9-10 NCAA Championships Fayetteville, Ark.

2007 OUTDOOR SCHEDULE

MARCH

- 17 Potts Invitational Boulder, Colo.
- 22-23 Glenn Morris Mutli-Events Ft. Collins, Colo.
- 24 Rob Upton Invitational Ft. Collins, Colo.
- 30-31 Service Academy Classic Lexington, Va.

APRIL

- 7 Colorado Invitational Boulder, Colo.
- 11-12 Mt. SAC Relays Azusa, Calif.
- 13-14 Sun Angel Classic Tempe, Ariz.
- 20-21 Oregon Invitational Eugene, Colo.
- 21 Jack Christiansen Invite Ft. Collins, Colo.
- 26-28 Drake Relays Des Moines, Iowa
- 28 Wyoming Invitational Laramie, Wyo.

MAY

- 4 **Ris Westen-AF Twilight Meet** **USAF Academy, Colo.**
- 9-12 MWC Championships San Diego, Calif.
- 25-26 NCAA Midwest Regionals Des Moines, Iowa

JUNE

- 6-9 NCAA Championships Sacramento, Calif.

