

Track and field: UT's Robison has NCAA shot put crown in sight

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Brian Robison hoped to challenge the Texas shot put record before the end of the season. He didn't figure it would come so quickly.

Robison smashed one of UT's oldest records when he uncorked a throw of 68 feet, 31/4 inches in the Big 12 track meet May 14 in Waco. It marked the second-best collegiate throw of the season and stamped the football and track standout as a contender for the national championship heading into Saturday's NCAA regional qualifications.

"I said all year that I wanted to get the record, but I just didn't plan on getting it done so soon," said Robison, a starting defensive end who also shares the school football record with five blocked kicks in his career. "But now that I've got it out of the way, I guess I'll have to put my goal up to hitting 70 feet at the regionals and just go from there."

Considering the way the Splendora native has been throwing, the senior's goal might not be that far-fetched.

Robison's toss bettered the previous UT standard of 67 feet, 7 1/2 inches, set by Oskar Jacobsson at the 1982 NCAA championships. It gave him his second-straight Big 12 outdoor shot put title after winning the discus title the day before at the Waco meet.

"I'm ecstatic and so proud that I can't talk about it without fixing to break down and cry," Robison said. "I'm so shocked I don't know how to explain it. It seems unreal."

UT coaches thought Robison had record-breaking potential if he improved his techniques to go along with his athletic ability. His strength and 40-inch vertical jump make him one of UT's most powerful athletes.

Those athletic abilities have enabled him to join a long line of UT two-sport stars that includes James Street, Bobby Layne, Michael Huff and Eric Metcalf.

"Brian Robison has always been very good," UT track coach Bubba Thornton said. "But he's at a point in his career where he has confidence. He's getting into rhythm it takes to make that



(Jerry Larson / Associated Press)

thing move, and he's getting confident in getting it done."

Texas' Brian Robison celebrates after winning the shot put at the Big 12 meet this month in Waco.

His record-breaking toss continued a run of top performances over the past five months. Robison described the excitement from his record-breaking throw as being similar to winning the football national championship at the Rose Bowl.

The 6-foot-3, 275-pounder finished with 58 tackles and led the team in sacks (7) and tackles for losses (15) last season.

His football training helped pave the way for his big track season. His dual outdoor championships prompted Big 12 coaches to select him as the conference's outdoor performer of the season.

And while UT throwing coach Mario Sategna said Robison's throws might improve if he concentrated on track, his competitive instincts in track are honed by playing football.

"Every Saturday during the fall, he's in an arena where he's competing in front of 80,000 or 90,000 people," Sategna said. "You have to be extremely dedicated to be a two-sport performer like Brian. He's just amazing."

Robison credited his recent success on a calculated decision made after football season.

"We decided to take it slow throughout the season," Robison said. "In the past, we felt rushed coming out of football, so I would always get a late start on everybody and I'd have to get rushed to get it going. But this year, we decided we weren't going to do that. We were going to break it down and work our way in. It's been the best for me."

The goal was to have Robison throwing his best late in the season. And that's happened in his past several meets.

"We knew his legs wouldn't always feel fresh earlier in the season because of spring ball," Sategna said. "We wanted to see good results, but we were more excited about building to the end of the season. But at the end of the season, he's a track and field guy and is feeling really good."

Robison ranks second this spring behind Garrett Johnson of Florida State, who threw 68 feet, 4 1/2 inches last month to snap a 22-year record at the Penn Relays. If Robison can qualify at the regional meet, they would match up at the NCAA nationals June 7-10 in Sacramento, Calif.

"I told him after the indoors he better get with it because I was coming after him in the outdoors," Robison said. "I knew it was going to be a tough feat. But now that I hit 68-plus, I guess I was right. I am going after it against him."

Robison and running back Jamaal Charles, both non-scholarship athletes in track, have provided a big lift from the football field.

"It's worked out well over the years, and we trust Bubba and (UT football strength coach) Jeff Madden to be able to work things out so it's not a detriment to football," UT football coach Mack Brown said. "They are both here on a football scholarship, but we'd like for them to compete for the track team as long as their grades are doing well. And if they can help them win, we feel like it's fun to let them go over there and play."

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