

## 2008 Outdoor RMAC Preview

Here we are at the final outdoor track meet of the regular season, the RMAC Championships. So far our athletes have broken all but four of the Mesa State school records. Hopefully a few more will fall this weekend. I'll try to break down the events based on the entry list we received today. Some athletes may be scratched before we start prelims, and those scratches might dramatically change the complexity of the races, but I'll do my best.

The team competition will be brutally competitive, as usual. As of today, three teams from our conference are ranked in the top 25 in the nation. Adams State (4<sup>th</sup>), Western State (11<sup>th</sup>), and Nebraska-Kearney (16<sup>th</sup>) will be battling for the team title, but Adams is the clear favorite considering they won the indoor national championship. Regardless, this is the kind of competition we face on a weekly basis. In all honesty, it simply makes us train smarter and harder in order to keep pace.

### **100m**

Dani Rose's time of 12.50 places her in 5<sup>th</sup> position in the rankings. The Adams State foursome of Shirlene Duncan, Indira Spence, Michelle Williams, and Drew Houston will be vying for the top spots, as well as the versatile freshman Keira Benson from School of Mines. Spence isn't entered with a time, but she will have a great shot at win in this event. If Rose can put together a great start and maintain her top end speed through the line, she has a shot at garnering some All-Conference accolades. Brandy Deimling has returned to running from an injury suffered in Phoenix a few weeks ago and has looked very good in practice. Stephanie Litsheim's continued improvement could place her in the top 10, which is a big accomplishment in this conference.

### **200m**

The same girls from Adams State and Benson are all entered in the 200m. Stephanie Dumas is ranked sixth going in and fourth through sixth places are separated by just over half a second. Dumas has run well all year in high pressure situations and there is no reason this meet will be any different. Litsheim has been improving all season in the half lap sprint, and this weekend is another great opportunity to PR and surprise some people. Tasha Thompson will also be running the 200 in an attempt to gain some points.

### **400m**

Our athletes have an unprecedented chance to potentially have three MSC representatives in the quarter mile. Michelle Williams from Adams State has an entry time that on paper is unbeatable, but after her it is a wide open field. Laura Knapp, also from Adams State, is sitting in second and is also the second seed in the 800. The 400 and 800 finals are back to back on Tuesday, so she will have to make an event decision, which could open the door even more for athletes. Knapp is less than half second ahead of our Ashlee Hafey, and Dumas is .05 behind Hafey. Dani Rose doesn't have an open time, but she is capable of running with both Hafey and Dumas. All three of these athletes have been running very well in practice so we expect good things during this event. Tasha Thompson is also in this event and she will need to run a season PR to be in the top 6 mix.

### **800**

At this point we start moving into the events that traditionally have been dominated by Adams State and Western State. Deb Benson's performance last week earned her a 7<sup>th</sup> place ranking and a spot in the fast heat. More than likely a sub 2:20 performance will be needed to crack the top 6 and earn All-Conference honors, and the way Benson has been running the last few weeks leads me to believe she has a shot at sneaking into one of those positions. Again, Adams has three of

the top four spots, but some of those athletes are entered in multiple events, so we will see where Deb lands after the fallout from event scratches that occur later on Friday. Jessica Smith has looked good in practice and seems to have recovered from her minor knee injury. Sam Hentosh, Monique Carrillo, and Janelle Haskins are doubling back from the 1500 to try and earn a PR. For Haskins, a senior, this will be the last race of her career.

### **1500**

The 1500 and 800 are spaced out enough during the day that the 1500/800 double is the most reasonable possibility for pure mid-distance athletes. Multiple All-American and senior Tanya Gaurmer (Adams St.) is the only athlete with an automatic qualifying time for nationals, but the next four athletes have a provisional time. Sam Hentosh is our leading candidate in this event.

As of now she sits in 14<sup>th</sup> position, but I expect her to move up after scratches are made. She is going to need to improve on her PR time dramatically if she is to sneak into the top 8, which in our conference is a major accomplishment. As I said before, Haskins and Carillo are also running this event and looking for more PR's. Esmeralda M. Ramos is also running the race after a PR last week, and I'll have more on her later.

### **3000m**

Sam Towne sits in 11<sup>th</sup> place in the 3k. There are several athletes with no time that are scheduled to run, but rest assured Adams, Western, UC Springs, and Nebraska-Kearney will send their athletes to the front early to try and push the pace. Towne does a great job of running even splits, and very often runs negative splits in this event. However, if she wants to be in the hunt for a top 6 spot, she will have to get out with the leaders and be aggressive because the leaders will be too far out of reach to make a big push to make up ground.

### **5000/10,000m**

Esmeralda M. Ramos is scheduled to run the 5000, 10,000, and the 1500. This is an audacious attempt, but she has experience as she ran the 5000, 3000, and 1500 at indoor conference. The 10,000 is Monday, and there are only five athletes with registered times. This means an unpredictable race. Heather Wood from Adams State has the only automatic time, so I anticipate her to run just for the win instead of time. The next two ranked athletes are also from Adams, but after that it is a wide open race. Esme's confidence and race tactics have been improving all season. If her 5k time from Phoenix is any indication she is ready to run sub 40:00. The altitude will dictate how fast she is able to click off her miles, but she is ready to take a shot at the top 6.

Esme is also our lone participant in the 5k, which takes place on Tuesday, along with the 1500. As expected, Adams and Western have the frontrunners, along with a long list of athletes with no time, but Esme will again swing for the fence and hopefully get out with the leaders and see how the race will shake out. This is the last distance event of the day, and for most athletes this will be their second or third event. Tactics will play a large role in who scores points, and Esme has a shot to be in the mix.

### **100m/400m Hurdles**

Natalie Corbet will represent MSC in the 100m hurdles. She is ranked 11<sup>th</sup> right now. She has been working on her leg turnover between the hurdles, so hopefully she can put a good race together and string some good hurdles back to back and run a PR. Two freshmen from, you guessed it, Adams State, lead this event, and they were All-Americans in the 60m hurdles at indoor nationals.

Corbet will double back in the 400m hurdles and Andrea Ager will join her. Corbet has chopped off time from her season best in consecutive meets, and Ager has been stuck around the 68 second mark. Both of them have been running faster in practice and are trying to perfect their

form over the hurdles, especially the final few. The key for them will be to get out hard and establish themselves the first half of the race. If that happens, both of them will be able to sneak into the top eight and score points for MSC.

#### **4 x 100**

This is always an exciting event. One small mistake during a handoff can throw off the entire relay and mean the difference between success and absolute failure. Our squad of Litsheim, Rose, Deimling, and Dumas has ran very well this season, even considering that they haven't had perfect handoffs on any occasion. We are ranked fourth in the event, .7 behind Nebraska-Kearney. If we run well and execute technically sound handoffs, we have a legit shot at being in the top 2.

#### **4 x 400**

We have run some capable 1600m relays this spring, but we have never had a healthy "A" squad at one time. And although the conference has also been holding out on its 4x4 potential we are sitting in third right now with a 4:07. We are going to have to run close to 4:00 to be near the top 2. Thankfully our foursome of Hafey, Rose, Dumas, and Benson are feeling good and are anxious to take a shot the other elite conference teams.

#### **Discus/Shot Put**

As the standings are now, Jacie Birt is on the verge of breaking in to the scoring column for MSC in the discus. She is going to need a PR over 120ft. to score some points. Tara Underwood can also be competitive if she can pop a few personal best throws and be consistent in the ring. Birt is sitting in 9<sup>th</sup> and Underwood is 14<sup>th</sup> to start the day.

Birt and Underwood are 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> in the shot put. But if they throw anything like they did in practice this week, they are going to jump into the top eight or nine. This would be a huge accomplishment for our throwers.

**Notes:** Here is the format for this meet. Due to graduations at other schools, the meet will start Sunday with the Decathlon/Heptathlon. Monday includes prelims for races up to 400 meters and finals for the 10,000 and 3000m steeplechase. All the finals will be on Tuesday.

The top three in each event receive First Team All-Conference recognition, while three through six receive Second Team All-Conference awards. In the relays, the top team is First Team All-Conference, and the second place team is Second Team All-Conference.

Seniors - Janelle Haskins, Stephanie Dumas and Tara Underwood

We wish them all the luck in the world as they wear their maroon for the very last time.

If you can make it to the meet for one day or the entire thing, it would be great to have as much Mesa State support as we can get! These young women have been working hard all year and would LOVE to see you there.

Matt