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Area athletes set to excel at Outdoor Championships

By Buddy Collings

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Fresh off a scintillating senior year at the University of Colorado, Oviedo's Olympian, Jenny Barringer, makes a run for track and field's World Championships this weekend.

The four-time NCAA champion leads a list of athletes with Central Florida ties into the USA Outdoor Championships, opening today at the University of Oregon's historic Hayward Field.

Barringer, a 2005 Oviedo High grad, competes Friday in the first round of the 3,000-meter steeplechase. She broke her own NCAA meet record two weeks ago in 9 minutes, 25.54 seconds. Barringer's best is 9:22.26, the American record she set in placing ninth in the Beijing Olympics last August.



The meet is the Team USA qualifier for August's IAAF World Outdoor Championships in Berlin.

Jamaal Torrence, state champ for Evans in 2002, is in a men's 400 meters field that includes the past two Olympic gold medalists, LaShawn Merritt (2008) and Jeremy Wariner (2004).

Other men's entries include Dr. Phillips grad Chris Hargrett in the 100, Oak Ridge grad Johnta Griffin in the long jump, and Colonial grad and UF senior Carlos Phillips in the 800.

Lake Brantley standout Neamen Wise and Bishop Moore's Ryan Paquin represent the Central Florida Gliders in the 10-event decathlon today and Friday at the USA Junior (19-and-under) Championships, which are being contested simultaneously with the senior meet.

The field includes SEC decathlon champ Gray Horn of UF and New Mexico whiz Curtis Beach, who smashed the high school national record this spring. A year ago, Beach scored 7,026 points at the Junior Championships to place third behind two college athletes. Wise totaled 6,363 for 11th. Top finishers earn berths in the Pan Am Junior Championships in Trinidad, July 31-Aug. 2.

Other junior entries include college freshmen Nathan Duby (Winter Springs/FSU) in the men's 800, Allie Prendergast (Lake Highland/USF) in the women's 3,000, and Shericka Ward (Leesburg/Villanova) in the women's 100 hurdles.

Coverage is on ESPN Friday night (8-10) and Saturday night (7:30-9:30), and on NBC Sunday (4-6 p.m.).

Current Orlando residents in the senior meet include 2007 world 100 and 200 champ Tyson Gay and Tiffany Ross-Williams, one of the world's best in the women's 400 hurdles. Gay is entered in the 100, but because he is a world meet automatic qualifier as reigning champ he may not run all three rounds.

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U.S. track championships mean it's showtime at Hayward Field in Eugene

Posted by [mwilson](#) June 24, 2009 17:55PM

It's showtime Thursday at Hayward Field, where the USA Track & Field Championships begin a four-day run.

Things start early, with the junior men's decathlon beginning at 9 a.m., and the men's decathlon -- featuring two-time reigning NCAA champion Ashton Eaton of Oregon -- beginning at 11 a.m.



Doug Beghtel/The

OregonianGalen Rupp won the 5,000 and 10,000 meters at the NCAA championships and will wear an Oregon jersey for the final time this week at Hayward Field.

It will be a long, busy first day in Eugene, concluding at 8:30 p.m. with the men's 10,000-meter final and an attempt by Oregon's Galen Rupp to extend his dominance of college competition to the elite level.

By Sunday, USA Track & Field will have put together a team to send to the IAAF World Championships this summer in Berlin. There, the U.S. would love to bury forever memories of what has been perceived as a poor performance in the 2008 Olympic Games.

The juniors will compete for berths in the Pan American Junior Championships in Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago, although that meet could be canceled by a swine flu scare in the Caribbean.

As always in track and field, there will be lots of moving parts in a compressed timeframe. Because it's so difficult to keep tabs on it all, here are five story lines to follow.

1. How bad was the U.S. team in Beijing, and what should be done about it?

Doug Logan had barely assumed his job as chief executive officer of USATF when the men's and women's 4x100 relays both failed to get the stick around the track in Beijing.

Tyson Gay, the U.S. hope to challenge Jamaican Usain Bolt in the sprints, dropped a baton and was eliminated in the semifinals of the 100. Two-time world champion Allyson Felix got blitzed in the 200 by Jamaican Veronica Campbell-Brown.

Sanya Richards, the heavy favorite in the 400, cramped up on the home straight of the 400 and settled for the bronze. Lolo Jones, heavy favorite in the 100-meter hurdles, clipped the ninth hurdle, lost her balance and finished seventh.

The U.S. men's shot put contingent, supposedly the event's dream team and with a chance to sweep the medals, emerged with only Christian Cantwell's silver. Bernard Lagat, who won world championships in the 1,500 and 5,000 in 2007, came up empty in both.

It seemed particularly bad, because the athletes who flopped had big contracts and made-for-television back stories.

But it looked worse than it was. The United States had some compelling successes, too, like discus thrower Stephanie Brown Trafton, decathlete Bryan Clay and LaShawn Merritt, who beat archrival Jeremy Wariner in the 400 final for the gold by almost a full second.

Rupp, at the tender age of 22, was the top finishing non-African runner in the 10,000. While Jones didn't win the 100-meter hurdles, teammate Dawn Harper did. Shalane Flanagan became the first U.S. woman to medal in the 10,000 since Lynn Jennings in 1992.

In all, the U.S. team's seven gold medals were just one fewer than in Sydney in 2000 and Athens in 2004. The U.S. team returned with 23 medals in track and field, two fewer than in Athens, six more than in Sydney.

Logan has decided the USATF's Olympic effort needs a sweeping reorganization. Critics say it's an overreaction. The truth?

Well, all the marquee performers -- the good, the bad, the ugly -- will be in Eugene this week. A good showing at Hayward and a better performance in Berlin might suggest reports of a U.S. demise were premature.

2. Will Rupp take it to the next level?

He won six NCAA titles in 2008-09 -- five individually and one from running the anchor on Oregon's winning distance medley relay at the NCAA indoor championships.

One observer at the NCAA outdoor meet suggested in print that he was toying with the opposition. In the 5,000, after a competitor stepped on the back of his shoe, he came to a complete stop, replaced the shoe and still won going away.

He is everybody's favorite in tonight's 10,000 final, although Abdi Abdirahman beat him at last year's Olympic trials.

Some other tough, experienced pros will join Abdirahman and Rupp in the race, such as Meb Keflezighi, Tim Nelson, Jorge Torres and Eugene resident Dathan Ritzenhein.

It might not matter. Rupp and coach Alberto Salazar carefully have built to this point, not just during this season, but for years. Rupp will be on his home track, running in front of a crowd that idolizes him and wearing a UO uniform for a final time.

Odds of a breakout performance: excellent.

3. If Eugene is Track Town, what does that make Portland?

Three of the top mid-distance/distance training groups in the country are located in Oregon, with the Oregon Track Club Elite in Eugene, and the OTC training groups based on the Nike campus in suburban Portland coached by Salazar and former Wisconsin distance coach Jerry Schumacher.

Add University of Oregon Olympian Andrew Wheating to the mix, and Oregon athletes are favored to win -- or at least contend for a spot on the U.S. world team -- in every men's running event from the 800 (where Nick Symmonds of OTC Elite is the runner to beat) to the 10,000.

In the women's competition, Kara Goucher of Salazar's OTC group and Lauren Fleshman of OTC Elite figure to contend in the 5,000. In the 10,000, U.S. record-holder Flanagan (of Schumacher's group) and Amy Yoder Begley (of Salazar's group) are expected to be in the mix.



Brent Wojahn/The Oregonian Nick Symmonds won the 800 meters at the Prefontaine Classic on June 7 and will return to Hayward Field. The highlight moment of the 2008 trials was the come-from-behind, 1-2-3 finish of Symmonds, Wheating and Christian Smith, then of OTC Elite, as a standing-room crowd went ballistic.

It could happen again. More than once.

4. Is this Jenny Barringer's time to shine? And what to expect from Jordan Hasay?

Barringer dominated every college distance from the 1,500 through the 5,000, holding the college record in each. She is entered in the 5,000 and the steeplechase, which would be an improbable double since the first round of the steeplechase and the 5,000 final are back-to-back on Friday.

The Colorado senior, who has the U.S. record in the steeplechase, figures to have a battle this year at Hayward with Anna Willard. Willard beat Barringer in the 2008 trials, although Barringer had a better finish in the Olympic final.

In the unlikely event Barringer runs the 5,000, too, she could be tangling with veterans such as Fleshman, Goucher and Jen Rhines.

Hasay, who just finished her senior year at Mission College Prep in San Luis Obispo, Calif., got a rousing reception at last year's trials from UO fans who chanted "Come to Oregon," after she reached the 1,500 final.

Hasay must have listened. She will run for the Ducks starting with the 2009 cross country season.

Hasay is back this year in the 1,500, in which she holds the national high school record. Don't expect her to win. But do expect an enormous crowd response.

5. Why are these guys ducking for cover?

Gay, who electrified the 2008 trials by running a wind-aided 9.68 100 meters, is promising only to run one round of the 100 this week.

Wariner, who has possibly the most intriguing rivalry in the sport with Merritt in the 400, will do a speed workout in the 200, a race in which he has no prayer of winning.

Kerron Clement, the 2007 world champion in the 400 hurdles, will run only the open 400.

Lagat will run the 800 as a tune-up workout rather than taking on Matt Tegenkamp and Chris Solinsky of Schumacher's OTC group in the 5,000 or dueling with Alan Webb and Lopez Lomong in the 1,500.

What gives? Gay, Wariner, Clement and Lagat are 2007 world champions and exempt from qualifying for the IAAF World Championships.

Each will make what amounts to an exhibition appearance.

If the sport really wants to appeal to average U.S. sports fans, its big names should be competing to win in national championships.

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