

Increased Numbers, Deeper Talent Have Lancers Seeking To Climb GPAC Ranks

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A year after showcasing its talent at home, the Mount Marty College men's and women's track and field teams will now look to improve in numerous ways.



With an increase in numbers comes improved depth, and the Lancers are seeking to climb the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) team standings.

Last year at the GPAC Outdoor Championships, held at Williams Field in Yankton, MMC finished ninth on the women's side and 12th on the men's.

There lies the motivation for the 2010 outdoor season.

"We've really got some nice things happening with our program, especially in terms of numbers," MMC head coach Randy Fischer said. "The depth is getting closer to where we can compete more consistently in the GPAC."

"It's a quality conference, so we

always have a goal to better our standing."

To do, the Lancers will again rely on some similar faces on the women's side, as well as some newcomers who figure to assist in that effort.

Mount Marty returns five athletes who earned top-12 finishes at last year's GPAC outdoor meet, in addition to three relays that were among the top-10.

Leading the way will be Carly Benson (Sr.) in the hurdles. The former MMC volleyball standout finished fifth in the 400-meter hurdles last spring, and was also a member of the Lancers' 400-meter relay (ninth) and 1600-meter relay (10th) squads.

"She gives us great leadership," Fischer said. "She'd like to try a few different events this year, but she's already done a lot for our program."

Katie Breuer (So.) returns to make another attempt at a GPAC title in the pole vault, a year after finishing third in the outdoor season. And in the jumps, Dana Riter is back after finishing seventh in the long jump and 11th in the triple jump.

Brittany Fischer (Jr.), who was 10th in the 1,000-meter run last spring, has already qualified for nationals in the marathon this sea-

son, as has Jade Steinberg (Fr.) — who was 12th in the steeplechase at the GPAC meet a year ago.

"Those two girls have great potential in their events," Fischer said. "With Jade, we'll try to get her qualified in the race walk again. She's just getting started in that event, so she's still learning."

Another athlete Fischer referred to as a "leader" is Meghan Nelson (Jr.), who will see time on the track in a variety of events. The Sioux Falls native was a member of two relays at last spring's GPAC outdoor meet.

Kim Velk (Sr.) and Whitney Lickteig (So.) will anchor the throwing events for the Lancers, Fischer said, while basketball players Kelly Schilling (Sr., high jump) and Alexa Berg (Fr., sprints/hurdles) will both take their shot.

On the men's side for Mount Marty, the Lancers will again be led by Titus Kosgei (Jr.), who was second in the 800-meter run at last year's GPAC outdoor meet. The Kenya native is coming off an All-American performance in the 800 at the NIAA Indoor National Championships.

"We're obviously hoping he continues his indoor success into the outdoor season," Fischer said. "We're resting him for a little bit now

(sore calf), but we can see great things from him again."

The Lancer men also had two relays finish in the top 12 last spring — 400-meter (11th) and 1600-meter (12th). Fischer said he believes the 400 squad could see an "amazing" improvement, with the quartet of Dane Hansen (Fr.), Anthony Blake (So.), Brandon Phizacklea (So.) and Trevor Lopour (So.).

Lopour, also a basketball player for MMC, figures to be one of the GPAC's top high jumpers as well, as he qualified for indoor nationals in the event.

David DeWitt (Jr.) returns to make another attempt at a school record in the shot put, while Dan Filsinger (Fr.) will take his cracks in the pole vault.

"We have a lot of guys from the indoor season who should continue that this spring," Fischer said. "We've improved in a lot of areas; it's something we're always working on."

Mount Marty will kick off its outdoor season at the Vance Butler Memorial on April 2 in Sioux Falls. Also this season, the Lancers will compete at the Sioux City Relays (April 16-17) and the Drake Relays (April 23-24) before competing in the GPAC Outdoor Championships on May 2 in Hastings, Neb.



LANCERS: Megan O'Grady (right)

MMC

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the GPAC in the past three seasons.

Mount Marty returns eight different players who batted over .300 last season for a squad that hit .319. Another from last year's squad batted over .300 in 2008, but slid under that mark last season due to injuries.

"In terms of offense and defense, I'm excited looking at the numbers we have back," Bernatow said. "Defensively, we have been right at the top of the league in four of the last five years."

Senior Trey Krier (.339, 19 runs, 15 RBI's), a second-team all-conference performer, and junior Josh Damewood (.462, 37 RBI's, 19 runs, 12 doubles) return with experience at first base. The duo, who are both also on the pitching staff, will share time at first with freshman Mathias Gotsil (Papillion, Neb.).

"We feel secure at first. We have a lot of depth," Bernatow noted. "With Mathias, we knew we were getting an outstanding defensive first baseman, but he hit well this fall and has done well this pre-season. That gives us leverage in late-game situations."

Sophomore Jason Livermont (.237, 13 RBI's), who came on to start much of the season at second base, will again man the bag. Sophomore Justin Kemp (.326, 18 runs), who also started some games at second, and Luke Elliott (.237) will also see time at second.

Sophomore Jason Schmidt, a honorable mention all-conference selection, returns at shortstop. The Mitchell native batted .368 with three home runs and 27 RBI, including an impressive .470 with three homers and 24 RBI in the



LANCERS: Trey Krier

team's 29 conference games.

Schmidt has started the 2010 season by batting .452, with 32 runs and 13 runs.

"Jason makes very outstanding defensive plays," Bernatow noted. "He's also good in the middle of the order for us."

At third base, sophomore Allen Hemeyer (.314, seven runs) will start the opener, with Yankton native Ross Heine (Jr., .256, 10 runs) and Elliott also spending time at the hot corner.

Elliott, a senior from Santa Clara, Calif., will be a key to the infield defense, especially with other players taking the mound or playing other positions.

"The one thing I like about our infield is the versatility," Bernatow noted. "Last year, when we brought Schmidt in to close, we brought Elliott in at short. That's how we'll start out this year."

Heine and junior Josh Wenande will split catching duties, with

Wenande's work behind the dish earning him the bulk of those duties.

"Josh is to the point where pitchers like to throw to him," Bernatow said. "Ross will spell him, and will see time at third and designated hitter."

A trio of veteran outfielders will be joined by a freshman, giving the Lancers a strong rotation of four outfielders.

Right field will be manned by senior Zach Lambrechts (.407, 24 runs and 24 RBI's) who led the team in doubles (13) and RBI (42) and tied for team lead in home runs (5). Senior Andy Turbak (.301, 21 RBI's 13 runs) will anchor left field.

"Zach is back off a good junior year," Bernatow said. "Andy is a good defensive outfielder. With the year he had last year, and seeing him in summer ball, I expect him to have a really good year."

Joining those two in the regular lineup is freshman Logan Kortan (Albert Lea, Minn.), who batted .420 this past fall. He was an all-conference performer for Albert Lea High School last season.

Dillon Lambley (.333), who struggled last season after batting .305 as a freshman, returns as the team's fourth outfielder.

"Dillon looks like he's getting his swing back," Bernatow said. "We'll work him into the outfield, and he could see time at DH. He helps us with late-game leverage."

Kemp and sophomore Nathan Roche (Norfolk, Neb.) could also see time in the outfield.

While the Lancers return the ace of last season's staff, Krier (3-0, 2.08 ERA, 23 K's), they graduated six pitchers that accounted for 200 of 376 innings and 24 of 53 starts.

"There will be some new names picking up innings and some old names picking up more innings," Bernatow said. "We did graduate a lot of pitching, but we have our number one and we have our closer."

Krier has the potential to finish among the tops in Lancer history in a number of career categories.

"His biggest strength is his mental makeup," Bernatow noted. "It's nice to have a crafty veteran like him at the front of the rotation."

The Lancers will be working to fill the other three conference rotation spots. Two of those expected to fill those spots each recorded five starts a year ago, Nick Huston (6.98, 3-2, 26 K's) and Nick Wenande (15.43, 3-2).

"Huston will start game one. He's thrown a lot of quality innings. Wenande has some of the best stuff on the team," Bernatow said. "This is their time."

Two players who didn't see a lot of mound work a year ago will also be in the mix, Hemeyer and Damewood (6.33, 3-1, 34 K's).

"When we recruited Allen, we were looking at him as a corner infielder. But his arm has gotten better, and he now has a fastball in the mid-80's with a good change-up. In fall ball, he allowed one run in 15 innings," Bernatow noted. "Damewood's ceiling is really high. We feel he has the potential to be an all-conference player."

Schmidt set school records for saves in a season (6) and earned run average (1.54) in his freshman season, and has established himself in the closer role.

"You don't typically ask a freshman to close, but he was one of the reasons we were competitive last year," Bernatow said. "His velocity is up from last year, which is good to hear out of a power pitcher."

In between the starters and bullpen, look for junior Jesse Bailey (Eau Claire, Wis.; Marshalltown CC), senior Brett Bohn (18.00), Yankton native Jake Broscha (Jr., 1.80, 10 K's, 10 IP)

and freshman Josh Homme (Papillion, Neb., 2.25, 1-0, 12 IP) to eat up innings.

"Bailey will be a mid-week starter for us. He is crafty and throws a lot of pitches for strikes," Bernatow said. "Bosch has paid his dues in the last three years."

Broscha is someone we're looking for more innings out of this year, as he has done a good job of developing his off-speed pitches. Homme is a kid that's thrown a lot of big innings and likes to compete."

Bernatow expects another tough league season, possibly one of the toughest in recent memory.

"Usually when I check the conference website this time of year, the league's non-conference record is 3-10. Right now, it's the reverse of that," he said. "The conference is going to be a dogfight. It will be a fight to see who gets the last spot in the tournament."

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Vermillion Tanager Track & Field Schedule

Date	Name	Location
3/29/10	Dan Lennon	USD Dakota Dome
4/6/10	ERI Invitational	Elk Point
4/8/10	VHS Booster Club Invitational	Vermillion
4/10/10	Dakota Valley Invitational	Dakota Valley
4/13/10	Canton Invitational	Canton
4/15/10	Lennox Invitational	Lennox
4/23/10	Lennox Booster Club Qualifier	Lennox
4/30/10	Howard Wood Relays	Sioux Falls
5/1/10	Howard Wood Relays	Sioux Falls
5/6/10	Yankton Dakota Relays	Yankton
5/13/10	Big 8 Conference Meet	Lennox
5/20/10	Region 4A	Dakota Valley
5/28/10	State Meet	Lennox
5/29/10	State Meet	Sioux Falls

Golf Schedule

4/6/10	Madison	Vermillion
4/8/10	ERI Invite	ERI
4/13/10	Dakota Valley Invite	Dakota Valley
4/20/10	West Central	West Central
4/26/10	Lennox	Lennox
4/30/10	Vermillion Invite	Vermillion
5/7/10	Big 8 Conference Meet	West Central
5/13/10	Harrisburg Invite	Harrisburg
5/14/10	Yankton	Yankton
5/17/10	Region 1A Meet	Beresford
5/24-25/10	State Tournament	Rapid City