

# MMC Track & Field Looks To Ride Fall Successes

BY CHRIS RILEY  
sports@yankton.net

Mount Marty College is looking to channel the success of the best cross country season in school history into positive results on the track as the Lancers enter the indoor track and field season.

The Lancer men and women harriers won two meets apiece this season, while also qualifying a pair of individuals to the NAIA National Cross Country meet. Both feats were a first in school history.

“We made huge strides as a team throughout the fall,” junior distance standout Jordan Pater said. “Hopefully everyone stays hungry and keeps working hard to improve each and every day.”

While indoor track and field encompasses a number of events, the mid-distance and distance races and relays will be a definite strength for the Lancers as they have their most depth and talent in those areas.

“We have some good athletes that we can build our team around at the mid-distance and distance events,” head coach Randy Fischer said. “We also have a handful of talented field athletes, but we are pretty thin in those events.”

Leading the way for the Lancers will be the distance duo of Pater and senior Kaylee Fly. Fly wrapped up her collegiate cross country career as a two-time national qualifier and set the school indoor records in both the 3,000 and 5,000 meter runs last winter.

“I am hopeful that I can qualify for nationals in the 3,000 and also help the 3,200 meter relay and distance medley relay teams qualify,” Fly said. “I still feel like I have not hit my peak and I can do something great - I’m excited about my chances.”

Pater became the first Lancer male to qualify for the national cross country meet since 2009 this fall and set the school indoor record in the 5,000 meter run in last year’s Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) meet while earning All-Conference status with a top-eight placing. According to his coach, Pater has made big improvements since last season and is looking for a big conference meet and season this year.

“Jordan has a very good chance to be a conference champ in the 5000 and possibly qualify for nationals in that event as well,” Fischer said.

Transfer Katie Smelker and former Elk-Point Jefferson standout Jordyn Hudelson will join with Fly to form three-fourths of a 3200 meter relay team that will look to be the first relay to qualify for the national meet in school history. They will look to



LANCERS: Samuel Lopez (left photo, number 3); Kaylee Fly (right photo)



the duo of sophomore Beth Finnegan and senior Brooke Fischer to fill out their team.

“We will see who steps up to the plate and where we are at,” coach Fischer added. “These talented newcomers make for some exciting possibilities with the relay events.”

On the men’s side, junior Josh Monson was an All-Conference member of the 3200 meter relay team a year ago and has improved steadily since that time while also gaining the attention of his head coach.

“Josh has improved a ton,” Fischer said. “He will help us out greatly in that mid-distance range and has become a vocal leader for the younger guys.”

Monson spent last season working on the mid-distance events as well as the multi-

events, but is focusing solely on the 800 meter run this year.

“I want to qualify for nationals,” Monson said. “It will take hard work - I’ve been doing double days, with sprinting workouts and then hard miles afterwards.”

Along with Monson, juniors Mychal Bierwagen and Sam Lopez along with freshmen Ryan Oye and former Sioux Falls Lincoln standout Gage Blaschke will compete for spots on the 3200 meter relay and distance medley relay along with the 1600 meter relay.

Lopez was an All-American in the 800 at last year’s NAIA National Indoor Championships but struggled to get up to speed this fall. He will need a return to form if the Lancers hope to qualify a relay to nationals for the third time in four seasons after miss-

ing the mark last year.

In the women’s field events, sophomore Abbey VanDenBerg will be counted on in both the long and triple jumps. VanDenBerg has the second best mark in school history in the indoor triple jump and placed 10th at outdoor nationals in that event.

Yankton native Emily Anderson will lead the way in the high jump while freshman Sadie Fedor should make an impact right away in the long and triple jump.

Missing from last year’s squad will be graduated pole vaulter Katie Breuer. Breuer claimed All-American honors in the pole vault in both indoor and outdoor seasons last year.

“Those are big shoes to fill,” Fischer said regarding the departure of Breuer. “Hopefully someone can step up and fill in some

of those points that Katie scored for us the past few years.”

School record holder Trevor Lopour returns to the high jump this year for the Lancer men, while a new face will lead the way in the throws. Freshman Will Mart, a Vermillion High School graduate, will continue to work under former high school and Lancer throws coach Lenni Billberg as he could be the best shot put thrower in school history early on in his career.

Former Buck Logan Ulmer returns for his second year as the hurdle leader for the Lancers. Last season Ulmer set the school record in the 60 meter indoor hurdles.

Freshman Vincent Raia of Windom, Minn. is hoping to become the school’s first full-time male racewalker. Although not a GPAC event, the racewalk is a NAIA national meet event if the qualifying standard is met.

“Vincent has been working extremely hard studying the art of the racewalk and with his dedication we are optimistic about

what he can accomplish this season,” Fischer said.

Although they know that winning a GPAC team title is next to impossible given their limited team size, the Lancers still have high individual and relay team goals going into the season.

“We don’t have huge numbers but we do have quality there,” Fischer added. “If everyone continues to work hard I think we can really surprise some people by the time the conference meet rolls around.”

The Lancers open their season in Sioux Center, Iowa on January 12 at the Dordt Invite. The GPAC Championships will once again be held in Lincoln, Neb. on Feb. 15-16 with the NAIA Indoor Nationals scheduled for Feb. 28-March 2 in Geneva, Ohio.

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## Coyotes

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USD returns all four runners (senior Casey Shade, and sophomores Erik Hill, Jeff O’Connell and Lukas Bernard), to the 1600-meter relay squad that finished first. The Coyotes also bring back everyone from the second-place distance medley squad.

Also back are sophomore Kyle McKelvey, who won the indoor shot put title, Shade (second in

the 800-meter run), junior Kyle Ballew (third in the pole vault) and sophomore Cody Snyder (third in the shot put).

“It’s a pretty good team with a lot of potential,” Pinkelman said. “We’ve always been pretty young, but we’ve got some veterans back. It’ll be exciting to see some of those guys compete with another year under their belts.”

Like with the women’s team, pole vault figures to again be a strength for the USD men.

Ballew finished third at last year’s indoor meet and qualified for NCAA West Preliminaries, while senior Kevin Sarekhkhani

took eighth at the Summit League outdoor meet. USD also added freshmen Peter Chapman (California state champion) and Preston Perkins from Marinette, Wis.

USD’s freshman class includes Christian Nielsen (Madison, defending Class A 400-meter champ), Isaac Allen (Lincoln, Neb.) and cross country runner Mubarik Musa (Worthington, Minn). Gottsleben said he expects an immediate impact from Nielsen.

“We should do really well,” Pinkelman said. “We were deep last year; scored in every event, so we’ll be about the same this

year. Hopefully that can give us some more points.”

The makeup of the conference meet, though, will see a change. Gone are Oral Roberts and Southern Utah, while Nebraska-Omaha joins the league this season.

“There’s certainly a different dynamic,” Gottsleben said. “But we feel like we’ve got some good freshmen that can contribute right away. We’re pretty fired up.”

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