

Heptathlon

Champion

Heather Miller, New Balance, 5860

On the 800 meters, the final event of the heptathlon:

"I was looking for a strong training, 800 meters. Lindsay (Lettow) and I are good friends, we talked before the race. We said we would go out and run 65 (seconds), we went out a little fast actually, and see what we had the next lap. So it was faster than I thought, but the other girls pushed us along and I finished stronger than I thought I would be."

On the upcoming USA Outdoor Championships:

"My score from last year at the USA Outdoor Championships will get me in, 6,100, so this whole season I have been just training for this year's USA Outdoor Championships. I'm trying to get some good races in earlier than last year and this is my first multi of the year, I didn't compete indoors. Basically I trained through to get ready for June."

On winning the Drake Relays title:

"It feels good, I wasn't in competitive meets last year, so I haven't won a heptathlon in a couple of years. Last year at Drake Lindsay (Lettow) beat me, and in Texas, Lindsay was there again. Then at USA's I came in fourth with a PR and it was a great meet. It feels good to win."

On the upcoming USA Outdoor Championships:

"I'm looking to get another heptathlon in at the end of May. I want to try to get a better score, string some events together. I didn't run a very good hurdle race yesterday, and I didn't long jump well today. If I can string a couple more more events together in May, I will be ready for USA's in June."

On her relationship with Lindsay Lettow:

"We are very competitive in all of the events. She is better maybe in a couple of events, but I'm maybe better at the runner, but she's a better thrower and hurdler than me. It is a good competitive, but friendly competitiveness, especially earlier on the year."

Decathlon

Champion

Zach Ziemek, Wisconsin (Unattached), 7,964

On his goal for the Drake Relays:

"I was shooting for 8,100 points, which is an Olympic "A" standard, which I knew wasn't realistic after my first day, but I was trying to go for 8,000 points today, and just missed it by 40 points."

On his two-day performance:

"My first day was subpar. Today, I was putting together a good meet. The 1500 meters isn't my strongest event. But I went out there trying to give everything I had, and I just came up short."

On redshirting for Wisconsin this season:

"Everyday I am training with my Wisconsin teammates, my guys. Once a Badger, always a Badger. So I know I am coming back next year and plan to lead Wisconsin to some victories."

On the upcoming USA Outdoor Championships:

"My goal, and my coach's goal have been to make the World team. I am going to USA's in June, and will have to put a meet together to make that team."

3:00 p.m. - High Jump - HS Boys Final

Champion

Jeff Giannettino, Senior, W Burlington/ND, High Jump, 7'1"

On how he's feeling and the key to powering through today...

"I was feeling pretty good obviously, it was a great day outside to jump, everything was kind of falling into place and clicking, the rhythm was working out pretty well, so 7' 1" came pretty well there, it was just a great day to jump, great day to jump PR's, and we both actually PR'd here, so it was an awesome day."

On clearing 7' 1" pretty easily...

"Yah it was actually a smoother clearance than I had far before at 6' 10," so that was encouraging. You know I kinda tweaked some things in between those two jumps and was able to clear that one pretty well."

On making the competition easier by having his teammate in the finals...

"I don't know about easier, he's pretty vicious, but it definitely makes it more fun having him there with me all the time and it's great to have a teammate there with you just to share the experience with."

On his third title and his expectations for today...

"I guess that was the game plan, but you never know what's going to happen, so it's good to have a good day to jump, and I feel good today."

On today's performance compared to last years...

"Last year I jumped 7', so this year I improved an inch which is super encouraging, and it's awesome to go even an inch in track and field because it's a lot, so it was awesome to get."

On goals for the future...

"Still shooting for that state record, 7' 3.5" there, so still going to keep working on some things so hopefully I can take another crack at that."

4:10 p.m. - 3,000 Meters - HS Girls Final

Champion

Stephanie Jenks, Jr., Linn-Mar, 9:33.81

On Being a Drake Champion

"It's really nice and it's an honor to come back every year and compete at the Drake Relays. I've been competing ever since my freshman year."

On goals for the rest of the season

"My season has pretty much just started up. I have a lot of post-season races that I plan on doing so this weekend is going to be trying to keep healthy and keep racing well."

On today's results

"It's pretty much just staying relaxed and comfortable and having fun, obviously."

4:25 p.m. - 3,200 Meters - HS Boys Final

Champion

Thomas Pollard, Sr., Gilbert, 9:07.50

On his strategy

"My strategy was to take it from the start. I just wanted to make it a fast race, make it hot, because I knew if it came down to a kick that Schweizer would be really tough to beat. He's got some speed, so I just knew I had to push it and kind of run away from him."

On his performance today

"I knew I was right where I wanted to be, but at the same time, you just gotta keep pushing because I knew that laps five, six and seven would be really important, so I just tried to put my head down and push on the back stretch just to keep the pace going."

About his lead

"I was aware they were right behind me the first few laps and then somewhere around four or five I think I lost them and so then it was just pushing against the clock."

About this year vs. last year

"I feel farther ahead than I was last year. I know I ran slower than I did last year at this point, but I'm fine with that. I know where I am in my training."

4:40 p.m. - 4x1600 Meter Relay- UD/CD Women Final

Champion- Oklahoma State-18:58.11

Natalja Piliusina, Senior, Kaylee Dodd, Freshman, Ingeborg Loevnes, Junior, Aurora Dybedokken, Freshman

"We tried to stay competitive. We knew there were a couple good teams here and we weren't too concerned about the time. The goal was to win."-Natalja Piliusina

"Washington made it a really good race so it was fun having them there and being able to compete and feed off of each other that way."-Kaylee Dodd

"When Natalja caught that Washington girl I knew that we were gonna win."-Aurora Dybedokken

"I started by just trying to catch my breath and cruise along the next two laps and I looked at the clock with a lap to go and I realized there was no way I could close with 61 so I just thought I would go for the win. I guess I had more left in me than I thought I did."-Natalja Piliusina

"We were just loving our victory lap that we just did. We started waving our flags and everyone in the crowd was cheering for us and it was just a really good atmosphere and a really awesome meet."-Kaylee Dodd

5:05 p.m. - 4x1600 Meter Relay- UD/CD Men Final

Champion- Oklahoma State- Time

Craig Nowak, Soph., Chad Noelle, Senior, Shane Moskowitz, 5th Year Senior, Kirubel Erassa, 5th Year Senior

Craig Nowak

"It was really tactical. I went out slow and it was kind of a cluster for a while, but I just tried to stay in a good position and it started picking up in the end."

Chad Noelle

"I ran second, so our plan was to break it open. I was going to try to get as much of a lead as I can. I did over the last 400, so I made a hard move at 400 to go and then I just tried to put as much ground at everybody as I could and then we were going to have our third leg, Shane, run away with it."

Shane Moskowitz

"My teammate, Chad Noelle, gave me a really good 30-meter lead when I had the baton, so my coach just told me to stay relaxed."

"It was awesome. I knew we had a really good team going in and I knew there were good teams that were going to be out there, so I was really excited I could pull off the win."

Kirubel Erassa

"I was just trying to control the pace. The guys from the other school were right there with me, so I knew it was going to be a closer finish, so I decided to just follow the pace from the beginning."

7:30 p.m. - 10,000 Meters - Open Women Final

Champion

Kelsey Barrett, JR- South Dakota, 34:54:45

On confidence and the race

"No one wanted to take it out, and someone has to, and the pace wasn't strenuous, it was really relaxed. A lot of the girls up front were really playful, taking turns leading, encouraging each other, and that was kind of cool. I'd never experienced that, so it was just a feel good vibe just from the beginning, it just felt great."

On Drake Relays

"Well I got a picture with Sanya Richards-Ross earlier, and I was pretty jacked about that. So I had heard about the atmosphere, I had heard about the drumline, but only just from teammates in passing, so it was just as good, if not better than I had expected."

On winning

"I mean, it's just cool to win in general. My last two years were not fun, they were a struggle, they were something I don't like to look back on. So I've been making so many gains. This is so unexpected. I'm still in shock, really. It's kind of emotional."

8:10 p.m. - 10,000 Meters - Open Men Final

Champion

Benard Keter, SO- Wayland Bapt, 29:34.75

On when he felt ready to seize control of the race

"I took the lead with five laps to go because my coach said to stay conservative with the guys. With like five laps remaining I was feeling good to go and I was like, 'I've got this'."

On his race strategy

"Coming here I thought the race was going to be slow and I was to take the lead maybe halfway. But it was kind of fast so I had to stay with these guys and take the lead with maybe six laps to go. Then at five laps to go I was like, 'okay, I have to go.'"

On his 29:34.75 finishing time -- what was the goal coming in?

"My goal today was to run it 30 minutes. That was my first 10k, I've never done a 10k before. I'm pretty happy."

8:40 p.m. - 5,000 Meters - Open Women Final

Champion

Maria McDaniel, FR- Western Michigan, 16:13:95

On taking the lead

"My coach told me to be at the beginning, but not take the lead right away. And the field, it went out fast, but I felt like I could push it a little bit more, and with halfway to go, I figured it was a little bit slower than I needed to go. So then with a little bit over halfway to go I took the lead, and I was a little nervous that it was too soon, but we kept pushing, and then the competition came up and tried to get me, but then we pushed on together, and then I think I just made the distance a little bit wider and pushed it from there. With a K (kilometer) to go, I just gave it all I had left,"

On her first Drake Relays

"We got here later last night, and I wasn't able to see the track until today, and I had a teammate do the pentathlon today, and there wasn't a lot of people here, it was a little bit empty. But I knew Drake was a big meet, and I know tomorrow there'll be lots of energy. And today with the band, that was really fun. So it's been really great!"

9:05 p.m. - 5,000 Meters - Open Men Final

Champion

Ian Barnett, JR-Illinois, 13:56.16

Was at front of pack entire race -- gameplan coming in?

"We were going to have a few other guys with us, but (Ryan) Rutherford and (John) Mascari dropped out so it ended up coming down to me and my teammate Jannis (Topfer) and we decided we'd just switch off 800s and try to go for a fast time, try to get the field some fast times too. I mean, it worked out really well. We played it perfectly and a lot of people got good times.

On finishing under 14 minutes

"We were planning to try and get under 14. I think that is actually an outdoor PR (personal record) for me so I'm pretty happy. Perfect night. Drake Relays is always an incredible atmosphere. This is the place to run fast and we were able to do that tonight.

On setting his outdoor PR at the Drake Relays

"It's awesome, doing it at this facility and being able to do it in front of a big crowd."

Afternoon Beijing World Championship Preview Quotes

Derek Drouin, High Jump, Nike

Are you going to one-up your performance from last year?

"I hope so. That would be nice. This early in the season you can never really tell where you're at, but I would hope for it."

What was the atmosphere like last year? Attention shifted to the high jump for that half hour, what was that like, and was that one of the reasons for coming back?

"I had a great time last year, that's definitely the reason that I came back. It turned out to be a pretty great competition for everybody. I know it's hard not to get pumped up when people start really getting into the events. The atmosphere for us, for me at least I thought it was fantastic."

Last year the top three guys all broke the meet record. All three of you are back in the field again. How does that level of competition literally and figuratively raise the bar for you guys this early in the year?

“It definitely makes it easier, because now if you don’t make it this far on your first attempt, there’s someone, probably a handful of guys behind you, who are going to. So it definitely gives you a little added pressure, a little extra motivation, and once you see someone start jumping pretty high it’s motivating for you, and for everyone else to start elevating their game. So definitely looking at the list of guys, definitely anticipating some pretty good competition again.”

Dawn Harper-Nelson, 100-Meter Hurdles, Nike

What do you look forward to most when you get into Des Moines?

“I have to stay it’s typically the fans. For me, I think that’s the biggest part. The competition, you already know what that’s going to be like. But the fact that you meet so many people... So to me, I think that’s the biggest thing.”

What’s it like to compete at the Drake Relays?

“They’ve done a good job. It is a big event. You go to sleep nervous about it. I want to win here... Competing here, it’s a big stage for me. I think because it’s on your home turf, your friends and family get to see you. So it means a lot to me.”

How vital is it to have a Midwestern meet this early in the season?

“On the schedule, it’s really great to do this early. It’s really just something that, as my coach would say, it’s just something that athletes want to do. It’s not necessarily the make or break for June or make a team. But because it’s such a high caliber meet for athletes, it’s good to see where your head is, where your training is going.”