

Subject: Drake Relays Presented By Hy-Vee Announces 2015 Most Outstanding Performers
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Drake Relays Presented By Hy-Vee Announces 2015 Most Outstanding Performers

DES MOINES, Iowa - The 106th edition of the Drake Relays Presented by Hy-Vee thrilled more than 40,000 fans over four days of action with tremendous performances across all divisions. A total of 15 Drake Relays records were broken or tied and 10 world-leading marks were established. On Monday, April 27, the best of those performances were honored with the announcement of the Relays Most Outstanding Performers.

For the third time in Relays' history there are co-winners of the Maury White Award for the Most Outstanding performer for the men's collegiate/invitational division. Arkansas' Omar McLeod and reigning gold medalist Kirani James share the honor after making history at Drake Stadium last week.

James broke one of the most impressive Drake Relays record of all, winning the Beijing World Championship Preview 400 meters to erase the great Michael Johnson's name for the record book. James won in 44.22, the best time in the world so far. Johnson's previous Drake record of 44.41 was set in 1996 during the lead-up to his sensational performance at the Atlanta Olympics. James owned the previous world best of 44.31.

"With the degree of competition, you kind of expect that you have to run near to your season best to come out with a win," James said immediately following his record-setting run. "I'm very happy with my time, the competition, and the overall performance."

However, James' race could not overshadow the incredible performances of McLeod in the Most Outstanding Performer voting. The Arkansas' sophomore celebrated his 21st birthday by breaking the Relays record in the university-college 110-meter hurdles. McLeod, the NCAA indoor 60 hurdles champ this year, won in 13.21 to erase the old record of 13.48 set by Terence Somerville of Cincinnati in 2011. McLeod's time ranks No. 3 in the world this season and is the seventh fastest 110-meter hurdle time in college history. Following his record-setting performance, McLeod returned to the track to lead off the Razorbacks' 4x100-meter relay team, which won the university event in

39.78 seconds. On Friday, he ran the leadoff leg of the Razorbacks' 4x200-meter relay that also claimed a Relays title to help the Razorbacks finish second in the Hy-Vee Cup standings.

The voting for the women's collegiate/invitational Drake Relays Most Outstanding Performer also highlighted numerous worthy performances. However, it was Jasmin Stowers' record-setting run in the Beijing World Championship Preview women's 100-meter hurdles that rose above the rest to earn her the honor. Running out of lane seven, she beat a star-studded field in 12.40, the fastest time in the world this year and fifth-fastest all-time in U.S. history. The old Relays record of 12.58 was set by Kristi Castlin last year. Two-time Olympic medalist Dawn Harper-Nelson was second, Castlin was third, 2013 world champion Brianna Rollins was fourth and 2014 USA runner-up Queen Harrison was fifth.

"I was definitely nervous, facing the top hurdlers in the world," Stowers said moments after stepping off the track with Relays title and record. "I knew if I had a good start, I would have a good chance of winning. I couldn't believe I won. The time was crazy to me. My previous best was 12.71. Dawn Harper. Queen Harrison and the others were all great competitors. I knew if I stayed focused on my race I would be fine."

The high school competitions produced record-setting performances as they have for generations at Drake Stadium, but a pair of firsts in the boys and girls events produced this year's Most Outstanding Performers

Dowling Catholic's Ryan Schweizer was the near unanimous selection for the Robert Kramme Award, given to the boys high school Most Outstanding Performer. Schweizer became the first competitor in Drake Relays history to win both the high school boys 800 and 1,600 meters at the same Relays, as he won Saturday's 1,600 meters in 4:18.18. Schweizer won the boys 800 meters on Friday in 1:52.15, a meet record, and also helped the Maroons set a Drake Relays record of 3:26.58 in the sprint medley relay on Friday. In addition to winning three Drake Relays flags, Schweizer, a junior, was runner-up in the 3,200 meters on Thursday in 9:15.01.

"On Thursday I came in with no flags," Schweizer said upon making Relays history. "Two days later to have three is crazy. After I won two my parents told me to start looking for the next one. "

The recipient of the Gerry Cooley Award given to the high school girls most outstanding performer, Sarah Plock, also made Relays history. The Iowa City High senior became the first athlete to win the high school girls 400-meter hurdles three-straight times. Plock circled the blue oval in 1:01.22, just off the meet record of 1:01.01 set by Davenport North's AG Bradford in 2008. Plock is now No. 2 on the state's all-time list with a time of 1:00.55 earlier this year and is the defending Class 4A champion in the event. The recipient of the Gerry Cooley Award must be a senior in high school.

The 106th Drake Relays presented by Hy-Vee was staged in front 40,373 fans including the 50th consecutive Saturday sellout with 14,504 fans crowded around the Blue Oval. The 107th edition of America's Athletic Classic is scheduled for April 27-May 1, 2016.

2015 Drake Relays Most Outstanding Performers

Maury White Award (Collegiate/Invitational Men) – Kirani James and Omar McLeod
Collegiate/Invitational Women – Jasmin Stowers
Robert Kramme Award (High School Boys) - Ryan Schweizer, Dowling Catholic
Gerry Cooley Award (High School Girls) – Sarah Plock, Iowa City High

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