

Track competes at multiple meets

BY JOCELYN NEBEL
Staff Reporter

With the conference meet less than a week away, the men's and women's track and field teams competed at two locations last weekend to prepare themselves.

At the Drake Relays in Des Moines, Iowa, senior distance runner Danna Kelly ran her second best time in the 3,000-meter steeplechase, 10:50.20, and placed ninth in the field. Kelly was the only Div. II athlete in the event.

"It was a lot of fun, and overall it was a great experience to run with such a high caliber of athletes," Kelly said.

Kelly said the experience at Drake helped her mentally prepare for the upcoming conference meet. However, she said

she was a little displeased with her performance.

"It's kind of funny because I just felt really disappointed in myself in the fact that I ran my best time all by myself," Kelly said. "At Drake [I had] such great athletes running in front of me and [I was] not able to break my personal best. After I thought about it and after talking to coach, I didn't have anything to be upset about in the fact that to run very close to my personal record definitely does bring confidence going into this weekend."

Kelly said she will be working on attacking the barriers in the steeplechase for conference and said she is confident because she is in better shape this season.

Other top performances

at Drake included junior hurdler Shaina Dochterman in the 400-meter hurdles. Dochterman placed 11th and was the first Div. II athlete to finish the race. The 4x100- and 4x400-meter relay teams also competed well against the Div. I competition. Both teams placed sixth.

"[The relay teams] raced very well, the handoffs went well," Kelly said. "Going into finals on Saturday I think they were definitely nervous, but they were ready to compete."

Most of the Bulldog athletes competed in the Simpson College/Kip Janvrin Open in Indianola, Iowa. Truman also competed against a variety of Div. I teams at that meet. Top competitors included senior hurdler Matt Olson with a third-place finish in the 400-meter hurdles and soph-

omore thrower Alex Van Delft in the shot put. Van Delft won the event with a throw of 16.04 meters, an NCAA Outdoor provisional mark.

Van Delft said that earlier in the season he threw higher marks in practice and struggled in meets because something always seemed to go wrong. He said his improved performance came from a new technique assistant coach Leslie Hardesty taught the throwers this week.

"Coach Hardesty did a really good job of trying to simplify all of the throws to the throwers because a lot of us had been in our own heads lately," Van Delft said.

Sophomore thrower Derek Atwood placed second behind Van Delft in the shot put with a throw of 15.69 meters. Van

Delft said Atwood pushes him to throw better because there is friendly competition between them in most meets.

"If he's going to beat me, I'd rather see him go 55 [feet] and me go 54 [feet]," Van Delft said. "He can beat me, but he has to throw well."

On the women's side, freshman distance runner Anne Ratermann placed second in the 800-meter run with a time of 2:15.02. Ratermann missed a provisional mark by 0.02 seconds.

"[Ratermann] definitely had a great race," Kelly said. "I think that she's going to have the chance to lower her time [at the conference meet] and see how tough she is racing-wise."

Some women also placed well in the field events. Senior thrower Kortney Hole-

man finished first in the discus with a throw of 48.38 meters. Junior pole vaulter Katrina Biermann placed second in the pole vault with a vault of 3.65 meters.

Along with these top performances were some mixed results throughout the meet, including some double-digit places in events. Head coach John Cochrane said these lower performances came from athletes who could not handle the warmer weather or the wind Saturday.

"There was no middle in the meet," Cochrane said.

Cochrane said he will only be taking athletes to the conference meet who have an opportunity to score. The Bulldogs will compete at the MIAA Championships on Saturday in Joplin, Mo.

Athlete of the Week

Peter Bracha

Sport: Tennis

Year: Junior

Hometown: Ames, Iowa

Junior Peter Bracha went 3-0 at the MIAA Tournament last weekend. Bracha and junior Steve Hipkiss went 2-0 in doubles. Bracha also won his only singles match of the tournament. The Bulldogs lost in the semifinals of the event.

Bracha goes 3-0 at MIAA meet

BY BLAKE TOPPMEYER
Editor in Chief

Junior Peter Bracha provided a source of perfection for the men's tennis team last weekend at the MIAA Tournament.

Bracha compiled a 1-0 singles mark out of the No. 1 slot by defeating Emporia State University's Jose Vaca in round one, and Bracha teamed with junior Steve Hipkiss to go 2-0 in doubles.

The only match Bracha did not win was his second round singles match against Branden Joost of Washburn University. The match was unfinished, but Bracha was leading 6-5 when the match was called off.

"He's just a really solid player with lots of good strokes," head coach Pete Kendall said. "He's always very focused. He never says anything whether he hits a shot, misses a shot — he never says a word. He just goes about his business. His demeanor really helps him."

Bracha and Hipkiss' 8-4 win against Washburn's No. 2 doubles pairing of Drew Hanson and Ryan Ward highlighted the weekend. The pairings met earlier in the season with the Washburn duo winning 8-0.

This time, however, Bracha and Hipkiss went up a break to take a 2-1 lead and never looked back. They broke serve again later in the match en route to the victory.

"That first break was key," Bracha said. "The first two games were close. We were able to get up, and having the momentum on our side helped us out a lot."

Bracha and Hipkiss finished the season with an 11-3 mark in doubles. This spring was the first time in their careers that they partnered in doubles. Bracha said the duo decided early in the season they were going to both play primarily on the baseline, and this helped them break serve.

"We played two back the entire season, which is kind of an uncommon strategy for doubles," Bracha said. "But we thought that that suited our games better, that we'd be able to return under a little bit less pressure and then use our ground strokes to our advantage."

Kendall said their playing styles match up well. Bracha mostly hits power shots from the baseline, while Hipkiss sends a steady diet of lob and touch shots over the net, Kendall said.

In addition to his doubles win against the Washburn pairing, Bracha appeared to be headed for another marquis win against Joost, Washburn's No. 1 singles player, before the match was called as Truman trailed Washburn 5-1.

"That would have been fun to see that match finish," Kendall said.

Bracha, who finished the season 7-7 in singles from the No. 1 position, said he benefited from an improved serve during the weekend after struggling with it at times earlier in the season.

"A lot of players, including me, if your serve is on, then everything else works better," Bracha said. "That was big for me. My serve was really



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Peter Bracha prepares for a return earlier this season. He went undefeated at the MIAA Tournament last weekend.

working well."

Bracha will be one of six seniors on the men's roster next year. After finishing this season with an 8-6 record, Bracha said he only expects that mark to improve next year with a veteran-laden roster.

"I'm really excited for next year," he said. "I knew freshmen year when we were here, we had a bunch of good freshmen. I just [thought], 'Three years from now, we could be really good.' I think that next year will be our year that hopefully we'll be able to step up."



DRIVE SAFE
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Data taken from the 2008 MCHBS. N=296