

Swede track and field off to good start at UNK

Written by Deb Egenberger

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KEARNEY—There are always plenty of question marks going into the first track and field meet of the season.

Early competition comes with limited preparation time for everyone and some unknowns among opponents.

Gothenburg boys and girls track coach Steve Reeves said he tries to ease into the season with the University of Nebraska at Kearney Indoor Invite, entering those he feels are most ready for an early meet and not overloading anyone.

“We saw a lot of encouraging things,” Reeves said. “The kids competed hard right off the bat and that’s always a good thing to see.”

The Gothenburg boys finished second among nine teams and the girls were fifth. Neither competed with a full team.

Reeves said the Swede boys performed well, offering what he expected from those with experience.

Two Swedes came away with individual gold medals.

Senior Aaron Collins took first in the triple jump with a distance of 40 feet, 10 inches. Reeves said Preston Franzen’s second-place finish in the event was a team bonus.

Franzen also had a notable performance in the 55-meter hurdles, finishing a close second in a time of 8.38 seconds. Junior Blake Ristine was third in 8.50 seconds.

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Ristine was second in the pole vault as well, clearing 13-feet while Skyler Kottwitz came in fifth.

Swede sophomore Tanner Borchardt got a good start in the shot with a personal best distance of 51-1.5 for first place.

“That’s a good place to start,” Reeves said. “Overall, it’s very encouraging.”

On the girls side, Gothenburg came away with two individual champions and a gold medal in the 4x400 relay.

Sophomore Tiani Reeves finished first in the long jump with a distance of 18 feet, 4.5 inches. That’s just three inches shy of her school record from last season and it was nearly three feet farther than the second-place finisher.

“Things will improve there as we get more practice on her approach,” the coach said.

In the shot, junior Emily Franzen beat 20 other throwers with a personal best 38 feet, 2.5 inches. That distance slips her into the school’s all-time Top 10 at No. 10.

Reeves said he was also pleased with junior Kyndal Holmes’ performance as she placed third, also with a personal best throw of 37-4.

As for the relay, Reeves expected a strong performance with three of the four runners returning from last year’s state qualifying squad.

Reeves added freshman Jennifer Maline to veterans Aryn Meisinger, Regan Geiken and Tiani Reeves for a winning time of 4:19.06.

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“That time will improve too as we settle into a consistent fourth (runner),” the coach said.

Gothenburg boys and girls split for competition this week as the Swede boys travel back to Kearney for another indoor invite on Friday and the girls go to Sidney for an outdoor meet, weather permitting, on Saturday.

Events begin at UNK at 5 p.m. on Friday and start at 9:30 a.m. MT Saturday in Sidney.