

Countdown to showtime for wrestling and track

Almost everybody knows what they say about practice leading to perfection, so it was no surprise to find student-athletes aggressively preparing for the start of the Division II Wrestling Championships, which will begin today on the University of Houston campus.

Division II track and field athletes also spent Thursday getting ready for today's prelims.

Meanwhile, swimmers and divers continued with finals, crowning national champions in another 11 events. For more information on the swimming and diving competition, see page 2.

Stephen Nowland/NCAA Photos

Festival athletes meet the real senior class

Division II swimmers and divers took a break from flexing their muscles in the pool to flex some community engagement at Houston's Campus Recreation Center on Thursday.

Student-athletes hosted about 100 seniors from two Houston community centers who came to watch them in the preliminaries and then interact over snacks and sodas.

The event fits a pattern of outreach at Division II National Championships Festivals during which student-athletes over the years have helped with everything from Habitat for Humanity builds and youth clinics to engaging with school children and now senior citizens.

"It's good to be known not just as an athlete who comes to the host city, uses the athletics facilities and goes home," said Shippensburg freestyler Theresa Simcic. "Every city in which we compete has a different culture, and it's good to go out and meet the people."

The seniors certainly enjoyed it. Several said they had been student-athletes themselves or had taken an interest in college sports. Some participate in a weekly "floor hockey" league, while others are involved in a cheerleading group. Still others are "Golden Steppers," who demonstrated some smooth moves to the student-athletes during a presentation of their skills.

"Many of us enjoy these physical activities in order to get back our youthfulness," said Houston resident Marsha Listen, who leads the floor hockey group. "Interacting with these young student-athletes is exciting for us. We've been talking about this for three weeks!"



Stephen Nowland/NCAA Photos

Billy Meyer of Minnesota State Mankato talks to Ardis Douglas during the senior visit.

Drury women speed to top, break records in four events

If there's such a thing as speeding in swimming, there were plenty of tickets handed out Thursday night at the Division II Women's Swimming and Diving Championships in the form of meet records.

Drury swimmers were the speediest, setting meet marks in four events and reclaiming the lead in the team standings after Wayne State led the first day.

The Panthers' 200-yard freestyle relay team of Enuate Garro (who won



Joshua Duplechian/NCAA Photos

Drury coaches and swimmers celebrate on four Panther victories during Thursday night's action.

Wednesday night's 50 free), Jing Hua, Kelsey Ward and Yuan Qing Li got the evening off to a rocking start in a record swim of 1:32.00, just .16 ahead of UC San Diego's foursome.

And after anchoring that victory, Qing Li came right back minutes later and smashed the meet record in the grueling 400-yard individual medley, winning in 4:15.76, more than two seconds faster than West Chester's Tammy Leane posted in 2006. Drury also scored big points with Abbey Musch's third-place finish in the event.

The Panther-fest didn't stop there as Janelle Slattery and Li Tao finished 1-2 in the 100-yard butterfly. Slattery bested her defending-champion teammate by just four one-hundredths of a second in a meet-record 53.76.

"I thought we were going to go fast when we came here," said the senior who placed third last year and second as a sophomore. "But I didn't expect I could be going *that* fast."

But Slattery didn't attribute her record or others at the meet to the new technical-suits being worn this year for the first time. "I don't know whether the suits have made me better or worse," she said. "If you put (the suits) in the water, they're not going to swim by themselves. (Crediting the suits) takes away from talent. It takes away from the sport."

The only individual swimming event that a Drury swimmer didn't win or in which a record wasn't set was the 200-yard freestyle, in which Cal State Bakersfield swimmer Loni Burton's 2005 record of 1:47.10 with-



Joshua Duplechian/NCAA Photos

Truman's Tanya Sylvester, right, and Delta State's Amanda Guidry congratulate each other after the 100-yard butterfly championship.

stood the challenge from Tampa's Jessie Bardin, who finished in 1:47.75. But even in that event, Drury got a third place out of Hua to pad its team margin.

The Panthers also scored in the one-meter dive with Shealyn Holland (fifth) and Lauren Bader (eighth), but Clarion's Kayla Kelosky won the event with a point total of 440.60.

Day 2 ended fittingly with a record in the 400-yard medley relay when – who else? – Drury finished more than a second ahead of Ouachita Baptist. Slattery led off the relay and Garro anchored it, leading to a record 3:43.11.

Drury coach Brian Reynolds praised his swimmers and divers for coming back after a key relay disqualification on opening day.

"It really shows the true character of your team – whether they're going to lay down or get back up," he said. "I'm so proud of my team because (getting back up) is what we've done."

"Two more days. We're at the halfway point."

Team standings after Day 2

1. Drury, 285.5; 2. Wayne State (Michigan), 206; 3. UC San Diego, 199; 4. Truman, 163; 5. Clarion, 132.5.

Event winners from Day 2

200-yard freestyle relay: Drury, 1:32.00*
400-yard individual medley: Yuan Qing Li, Drury, 4:15.76*
100-yard butterfly: Janelle Slattery, Drury, 53.76*
200-yard freestyle: Jessie Bardin, Tampa, 1:47.75
One-meter diving: Kayla Kelosky, 440.60
400-yard medley relay: Drury, 3:43.11*

*meet record

Wayne State finishes Day 2 with an exclamation point

Drury remains close behind in race for team championship

Wayne State walked away with the team lead at the halfway point of the Division II Men's Swimming and Diving Championships Thursday night, finishing with a statement by setting a meet record in the 400-yard medley relay.

Sean Smith, Jesper Akesson, Duarte Mourao and Sebastian Rzepa combined for a 3:14.15 finish, better than the 3:16.23 that second-place Ouachita Baptist swam in the preliminaries.

The 40 points from the relay victory vaulted the Warriors to a 232.5-218 edge over Drury, which started the day facing adversity after having its 200-yard freestyle relay team disqualified in the preliminaries. Wayne State made up valuable ground by placing fourth in that event while the Panthers sat idly by.

But Drury scored big in the 400-yard individual medley, led by senior Kyrillo Fesenko, who successfully defended his 2008 championship in the event.

Fesenko, who also placed third in Wednesday's 1,000-yard freestyle, took the lead over Wayne State's Mourao in the backstroke portion (second leg) of the race and cruised to a meet-record 3:49.17, a little more than a second under the previous best from Drury alum Jakub Jiracek in 2006.

In addition to Fesenko's 20 points in the IM, the Panthers got a second place from Jun Han Kim and a fifth from Tomas Kuzvard to keep Wayne State in their sights.

"It's really been a roller coaster for us," said Drury coach Brian Reynolds. "We gave up 40 points in one

relay."

Besides Fesenko's mark in the 400 IM, two other meet records were set in the relays. Limestone led off the night with a speedy 1:19.25 in the 200-yard freestyle relay, which topped the mark the Saints had set in the preliminaries. The foursome included 50-free winner Goran Majlat, who swam the anchor leg. He had help from Craig Jordens, Matt Parsonage and Anders Melin.

Wayne State set the other mark in the session's finale.

While the meet has been as fast as predicted, two records survived on Thursday night. While Wayne State's Mourao won the 100-yard butterfly by three one-hundredths of a second over Manuel Stiem of Indianapolis with a time of 47.25, he couldn't touch the 45.60 that Southern Connecticut State's Ben Michaelson swam in 2003.

UC Davis' John Keppeler's 1993 mark of 1:35.81 also withstood a challenge from Drury's Sergiy Bilov, who won this year's race in 1:36.74, just ahead of Wingate's Gus Chagas.

There'll be six more finals tonight, including the 500-free and a pair of 100s – the backstroke and breaststroke – in which Drury can try to catch the Warriors and secure a fifth straight national championship.

Team standings after Day 2

1. Wayne State (Michigan), 232.5; 2. Drury, 218; 3. Limestone, 171.5; 4. (tie) Missouri S&T and Ouachita Baptist, 138.

Event winners from Day 2

200-yard freestyle relay: Limestone, 1:19.25*
400-yard individual medley: Kyrillo Fesenko, Drury, 3:49.17*
100-yard butterfly: Duarte Mourao, Wayne State (Michigan), 47.25
200-yard freestyle: Sergiy Bilov, Drury, 1:36.74
400-yard medley relay: Wayne State (Michigan), 3:14.15*

*meet record



Joshua Duplechian/NCAA Photos

Wayne State's Sebastian Rzepa celebrates after his team won the 400-yard medley relay Thursday night at the University of Houston.

Texas remains deep in the heart of Kearney's Usman

By Jackie Paquette

Like most Texas boys, Arlington's Marty Usman grew up loving and playing football.

But when he entered high school standing 5-2 and weighing just more than 100 pounds, Usman turned to wrestling.

Now a junior at the Nebraska-Kearney and ranked third in the nation in the 174-pound class, Usman is back in Texas as a national qualifier for the NCAA Division II Wrestling Championships. He won the 174-pound bracket at the East Regional and heads to the Division II National Championships Festival with a record of 42-8 on the year and as the nation's leader with 15 technical falls.

"He works his tail off in the practice room and in competition," Lopers head coach Marc Baur said of Usman. "He is just an outstanding all-around student-athlete and really fires everyone up while still being focused. He is just one of those kids who is a hard worker. He is great to have in the room to set an example for the entire team."

Kamarudeen "Marty" Usman was born in Nigeria and came to the United States when he was about 5 years old. His family relocated to Arlington, Texas. After



Nick Hauder/UNK Sports Information

Nebraska-Kearney's Marty Usman (top) is the only wrestler at the festival to have competed at a Texas high school.

Usman entered high school, played football and did not hit any sort of a growth spurt, one of the assistant coaches asked him to join the wrestling squad.

Usman waited until his sophomore year to do so. He wrestled for the next three years in high school, closing out his prep career with a third-place finish at the Texas University Interscholastic League state meet and an overall record of 53-3 his senior year. He was offered a scholarship to NAIA William Penn University and

headed off to be a college athlete – as a wrestler from Texas, not a football player.

"All it takes is just a few people from somewhere to open the doors for other people," Usman said of his Texas roots and success in wrestling. "It is just great to be where I am right now and to be able to compete at this level."

After one season at William Penn, Usman transferred to Nebraska-Kearney. Baur says the Lopers were "fortunate to get him," although it was Baur's connection

with Usman's high school coach Henry Harmony that established the Texas pipeline to Kearney. The Lopers currently have seven Texans on their roster, with two coming from Arlington. Two-time national heavyweight champion Tervel Dlagnev was also from Arlington.

Usman is the only qualifier at the festival who lists a Texas hometown. His family will make the four-hour trip south to see him on the national stage.

"This is like part of a dream for us," said Usman's father, Nasiru. "It is something that I personally have hoped for. As parents we always hope for the best for our children, so this is just great."

In addition to his parents, Usman will also have the support of his younger brother, Mohammed, who is a freshman on the University of Houston football team.

"(Mohammed being able to come) is a big deal to me," Usman said. "We have gotten closer since we have gone to college and he is a big part of my support system. It is going to give me that mental edge and a little bit of an advantage to be at home with my family cheering me on. It is just great to be able to compete at this level in front of my family."

UIndy's veteran coach rises again after falling hard

By Jackie Paquette

As a coach, Scott Fangman hoped to reach new heights. But he never dreamed that he would fall so hard and so fast.

The University of Indianapolis director of track and field and cross country fell off his two-story roof while clearing snow earlier this season, breaking his pelvis in four places. In his many years of recreational mountain climbing, Fangman never experienced a fall like that one. His program, however, scaled a precipice when it earned its first women's indoor conference championship just weeks after the accident.

"At least I can feel confident that when I am not there they can still do what needs to be done," Fangman said. "I encourage the kids to do a lot on their own, so a lot of our success is directly because of them and the responsibility that falls in their laps. They know what they have to do."

Fangman has been at the head of the Greyhounds' track and field program for 14 years. He is a four-time Great Lakes Valley Conference coach of the year, having most recently earned the honor for the women's indoor season this year. He has led both the men's and women's teams to conference titles during his tenure, and his program has produced five individual national championships and numerous all-Americans.

He was in attendance when his women's indoor squad took the 2009 GLVC championship February 28, a trip that Fangman admits may have set his recovery back a bit since it caused a blood clot that returned him to the hospital.

Fangman won't be in Houston this week to oversee his five track and field athletes competing at the nationals because he is under a doctor's order to stay in Indianapolis.

"We know we will still have his support and his spirit



Indianapolis coach Scott Fangman (right) continues to recover from a mid-winter accident.

with us when we compete, even though he won't be with us," said senior Amy Schmitz, a national qualifier in the women's weight throw. "We know how to represent the team as if he were with us. It's just a bummer because we love to have him and his quiriness around us."

Along with Schmitz, Indianapolis features Andrea Horban in the shot put and Emily Schaf in the high jump. The men's team includes Willie Little and Sam Elmore in the weight throw. All five Greyhounds are fifth-year seniors, and Horban previously won a shot put national title in 2006.

"There is a lot of maturity on the team and a lot of times they don't get the credit they deserve," Fangman said. "I worry for them, but I know they will be fine."

Fangman plans to keep up with his squad and the rest of the indoor track and field championships through the

NCAA's live Webcasts. He knows his team will represent the Greyhounds and his program well, but he regrets not being able to be a part of the festival's atmosphere.

"Of course I just want to be with them," Fangman said. "But I have to use my head and think about my health. They will get it done; I know they will. It is going to be exciting."

The track and field athletes will try to do their part in Fangman's climb back to the top with another showing like the one at the GLVC championships, Schmitz said.

"Us winning conference made him realize we weren't sidetracked," Schmitz said. "We were saddened, but not sidetracked. It was our goal all year to win conference, and to see us accomplish that really gave him an emotional lift."

Hopefully the conference boost and whatever his athletes can accomplish at the national level will keep Fangman on top for a little while longer – without falling.

Division II model built to handle difficult times

Our nation's economic crisis is requiring college sports administrators to stretch resources without compromising the student-athlete experience.

This is a challenge for me, just as it is for the other 287 athletics directors in Division II. What encourages me, though, is that we in Division II are better positioned than most to deal with this complicated problem.

Certainly, nobody should have any illusions about the current financial climate in higher education and intercollegiate athletics. Enrollment is down at many institutions, which is reducing tuition revenue. At the same time, donations are declining, and endowment investments are in a free fall.

None of that is good news for anybody, but all of those circumstances are more problematic for financially overextended programs. Our Division II model, however, is the most fiscally conservative in all of college sports. Not only does our philosophy emphasize regional competition, but we also employ a partial-scholarship approach that controls expenses and generates institutional revenue.

Of course, the philosophy represents only an advantage. It is not a shield that provides absolute protection against the relentless economic challenges that we face at institutional, conference and national levels. In no way does it relieve us from making tough decisions as we attempt to deal with the faltering economy.

That brings me to my current role as chair of the Division II Championships Committee, the group that has been charged with maximizing resources for Division II postseason competition.

For fiscal year 2008-09, Division II has allocated about \$15 million to conduct 25 championships. Last year, air travel expenses were up about 13 percent for the Division II men's basketball tournament and about 19 percent for the women's tournament. For the year, overall Division II championships expenses jumped about 10 percent.

To deal with this problem and to hedge against future financial uncertainties, Division II presidents in January asked the Championships Committee to examine our policies and determine where reasonable savings might be achieved. At the urging of the Division II Presidents Council, the committee agreed to a subregional contingency plan for the remainder of 2008-09 that will be triggered when all teams participating in a regional tournament would be required to fly to the host site, based on mileage tests. If the policy was implemented, it would mean that top-seeded teams would continue to host throughout the regionals; however, competition in the other half of the bracket would be hosted by the No. 2 seed.

As with many circumstances surrounding this financial crisis, this solution is not perfect. Some of a top seed's hard-earned advantage could be taken away if this policy was employed. However, the advantage lost is rather small, and the savings in a single year could exceed \$300,000 – money that could be used to maintain current bracket sizes (Division II's are the most inclusive in all of the NCAA) and per diem allowances in future years.

This week's Division II National Championships Festival also has been affected by the economy, although I hope in ways that will be invisible to participants and fans. One of the primary benefits of the festival is its economy of scale – turning what would have been three events into one – and we want to continue to use some of those savings to create a special experience for those taking part.

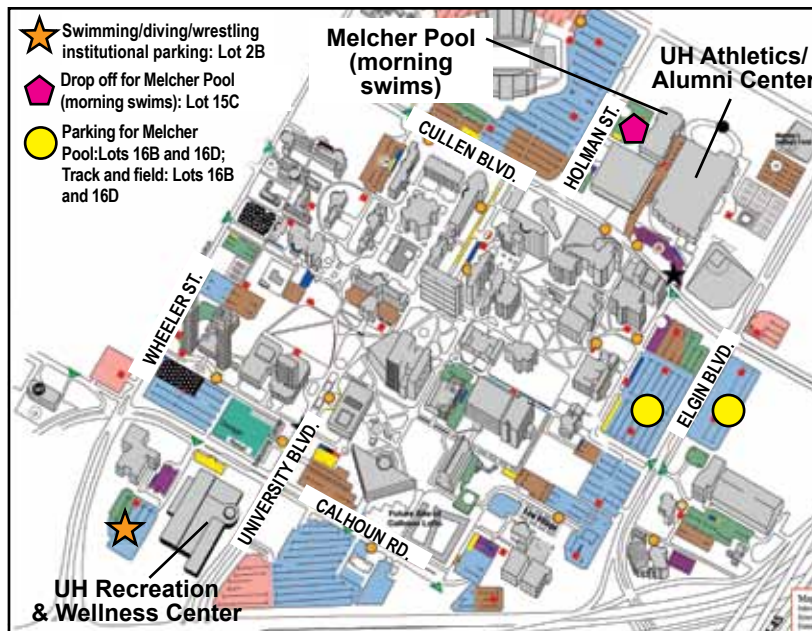
None of this decision-making comes with an instruction manual, and I can't promise anybody that every decision will be popular. I can tell you, however, that our leadership is trying to find the best possible answers in unusually difficult circumstances.

These days, that's one of the few things you can take to the bank.



David Riggins

David Riggins is athletics director at Mars Hill College and chair of the Division II Championships Committee.



Schedule of events

Friday, March 13

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|---|-----------|
| Track and field competition | 9 a.m. |
| Swimming and diving preliminary competition | 10 a.m. |
| Wrestling competition (Session I) | 11 a.m. |
| Swimming and diving finals competition | 5:30 p.m. |
| Wrestling competition (Session II) | 6 p.m. |

Saturday, March 14

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|---|--------------|
| Track and field competition | 9 a.m. |
| Wrestling competition (Session III) | 10 a.m. |
| Swimming and diving preliminary competition | 10 a.m. |
| Swimming and diving finals competition | 5:30 p.m. |
| Wrestling competition (Session IV) | 6 p.m. |
| Closing ceremony | 7:30-10 p.m. |

Broadband schedule

Friday, March 13

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Swimming and diving prelims | 10 a.m.-conclusion of session |
| Swimming and diving finals | 5:30 p.m.-conclusion of session |
| Track and field | 9 a.m.-7:40 p.m. |
| Wrestling session I | 11 a.m.-conclusion of the session |
| Wrestling session II | 6 p.m.-conclusion of the session |

Saturday, March 14

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Swimming and diving prelims | 10 a.m.-conclusion of session |
| Swimming and diving finals | 5:30 p.m.-conclusion of session |
| Track and field | 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m. |
| Wrestling session III | 10 a.m.-conclusion of the session |
| Wrestling session II | 6 p.m.-conclusion of the session |

Swimming and wrestling events are at the UH Campus Recreation and Wellness Center. Track events are at the UH Athletics/Alumni Center.



Bemidji State runner Kristi Buerkle practices her starts during preparation Thursday.

NCAA complimentary shuttle service

The NCAA will provide complimentary shuttle service from the Hyatt Regency downtown to the University of Houston (both competition venues). Because of limited parking, teams and fans are encouraged to use the shuttle service when traveling to the competition venues as well as to the opening and closing ceremonies.

| Date | Service from | Service to | Hours of service |
|--------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Thurs. | Hyatt Regency | UH | 5:30 a.m.-10 p.m. |
| Fri. | Hyatt Regency | UH | 5:30 a.m.-10 p.m. |
| Sat. | Hyatt Regency | UH | 5:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m. |
| | Hyatt Regency | Discovery Green | 7:30 p.m.-11 p.m. |
| | UH | Discovery Green | 7:30 p.m. |

The Hyatt Regency to University of Houston shuttle will run on the half hour. The transportation loop will include the Hyatt-Melcher Pool (5:30 a.m.-noon)-CWRC-Track-CWRC-Hyatt.

Directions

Directions from Hyatt Regency to the University of Houston Recreation and Wellness Center:

- Start out going left on Smith
- Turn left onto Jefferson
- Jefferson turns into Spur 5
- Stay to left and follow signs to University of Houston
- Merge onto TX-5 Spur toward University Drive
- Turn right onto University Boulevard
- Turn left onto Calhoun Road
- Turn left into parking lot 2B

Directions from the University of Houston Campus Wellness and Recreation Center to the Hyatt Regency:

- From parking lot 2B, turn right onto Calhoun Road
- Turn right onto University Boulevard
- Turn left onto TX-5 Spur North
- Take the I-45 ramp North and then stay to the right and follow signs to Scott Street/Downtown
- Scott Street will merge into Pease Street
- Turn right onto Louisiana Street

Directions to Melcher Natatorium

- Take I-45 south to the Cullen exit.
- Turn southwest to go through the UH main entrance (between halves of the large "split obelisk" at the entrance drive)
- Go through the light at Elgin Street.
- Turn right at the next light at Holman Street (Hofheinz Pavilion sits on this corner)

Directions from Hyatt Regency to University of Houston Athletics/Alumni Center:

- Start out going left on Smith Street
- Turn left onto Jefferson Street
- Jefferson turns into Spur 5
- Stay to left and follow signs to University of Houston
- Merge onto TX-5 Spur toward University Drive
- Turn right onto Wheeler Street
- Turn right onto Cullen Street
- Turn right into parking lots 16B or 16D

Directions from the University of Houston Athletics/Alumni Center to Hyatt:

- From parking lot 16B or D, turn left onto Cullen Street
- Turn left onto Wheeler Street
- Turn left onto TX-5 Spur North
- Stay to the right and follow signs to Scott Street/Downtown
- Scott Street will merge into Pease Street
- Turn right onto Louisiana Street

Tickets

Tickets will be sold at the main entrance to the University of Houston's Campus Recreation and Wellness Center and at the main entrance to UH's Athletics/Alumni Center. Tickets will be \$5 daily for Wednesday and Thursday and \$10 daily for Friday and Saturday. Each ticket will be good daily and will allow entrance to any national championship competition that day.