



# 2005 COUGAR TRACK & FIELD **OUTLOOK**



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## Promising Newcomers and Accomplished Veterans Lead WSU Women's Track & Field Team

There are lots of new faces on the Washington State women's team including seventeen true freshmen, two transfers and five redshirt freshmen that bring some level of the unknown to Head Coach Rick Sloan.

"I think there is a lot of talent and how they adjust to college competition and going up against the Pac-10 competition, will make the difference on how the team does," Sloan said.

Nine of the freshmen bring state champion titles: Sarah Burns (triple jump), Selena Galaviz (400m), Isley Gonzalez (cross country, 3200m), McKinnon Hanson (high jump), Collier Lawrence (cross country, 3200m, 1600m), Haley Paul (800m, 1600m), La Shawnda Porter (100m, 200m), Lisa Waananen (cross country, 3200m), and Jessica Zita (discus, shot put). Add to that mix a junior college All-American heptathlete in junior transfer Katie Miller, and it is easy to see why the Cougar coaching staff is cautiously optimistic.

"Our goal is to use our season to prepare us for championship competition and have people show the improvement we expect of them," Sloan said. "If that happens, we'll be competitive. But we also need to keep the people who can get the job done in a healthy state and have them prepared for the meets that matter most."



Robin Mikes

Returning veterans who know the routine include these Pacific-10 Conference scorers: Rachel Bertholf and Jenna Dean (javelin), Tamara Diles (pole vault), Kaylee Gardner (triple jump), Robin Mikes (high jump), Kayle Peterson (steeplechase), and Diana and Julie Pickler (heptathlon).

The multi-events athletes, the Picklers and Miller, will be able to provide depth in many areas for the Cougars.

"Our number one objective is to have people prepared physically and mentally for championships competition and we treat the Husky dual meet as championship competition," Sloan said. "Our emphasis will be on the months of May and June. What we do early on is not as significant as what we do when people are scoring the points for championships. That will be our emphasis, make sure that our stars are on the field scoring points for the Cougars."

### SPRINTS

Junior Nicole Hatcher leads the women in both the 100m and 200m races after making significant progress last year to times of 11.88w and 24.48. Coaches Mark Macdonald and Ellannee Richardson made some adjustments in Hatcher's running technique and she responded with strong fall training.

Joining Hatcher are newcomers Nicole McClendon, a redshirt freshman who came to WSU at the semester last year, and freshman La Shawnda Porter. McClendon was slowed by injury and redshirted the outdoor season. Porter, a good long sprinter, was a state champ in the 100m and 200m, and may see action in the 400m on occasion.

Sophomore Brandi Probasco-Canda will see action again in the 200m and 400m with lifetime-best times of 24.64 and 54.07. The coaches are confident she can drop her times in both events and are excited about her potential this season.

"Our women's sprint corps seems to be in good hands with the group that we have to work with," Sloan said.

### MIDDLE DISTANCE

Among the freshmen, Haley Paul is stirring up the most excitement for Sloan and Coach Jason Drake after her showing as the number one cross country runner last fall.

"Haley really is an outstanding competitor and outstanding talent in those middle distance races," Sloan said. "We are really looking forward to her performing on the track this spring." Freshmen Isley Gonzalez, Collier Lawrence and Meghan Leonard join the team after outstanding high school careers and good training during the WSU cross country season. Gonzalez was a state cross country and 3200m champion and the coaches have identified her as a probable strong contributor to the program in the middle distance races and possibly the steeplechase. Lawrence also won a state cross country title and Sloan envisions her range going from 1500m all the way through the longer distances. Leonard redshirted last fall after coming to WSU as a multi-sport letterwinner and further training just in track will allow her to develop her talents.

Sophomore Katie Troy dealt with some lower leg problems last year but rebounded well with a good cross country season and should continue to progress on the track this spring. Senior Molly Bull and redshirt-freshman Karen DeMartini, back after injury, will significantly impact the Cougars in the 800m and 1500m races.

### DISTANCE

With a plethora of young talent, the Cougar distance corps has an opportunity to establish a name for itself.

Sophomore Kayle Peterson returns after an outstanding first season where she set the school freshman steeplechase record and finished eighth in the Pac-10 meet. She will be joined by sophomore Natalie Smith and probably Leonard, who Sloan sees as a potentially great steeplechaser with her strength and athletic ability, as well as Gonzalez.

In the 5000m and 10,000m races, WSU will rely on sophomores Kelly Ramirez and Natalie Smith along with freshmen Lawrence and Waananen who trained together during the cross

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country season but haven't worn the uniform on the track yet.

## HURDLES

"Our hurdlers, for the most part, are our multi-event competitors which isn't a bad thing since they are all good hurdlers," Sloan said.

Redshirt sophomores Julie Pickler and Diana Pickler are both under 14-seconds in the 100m hurdles. Diana Pickler was the national prep 300m hurdles leader as a senior and ready to make the transition to the 400m hurdles. Junior college transfer Miller has shown Sloan significant improvement in her 100m hurdles during indoor training to date, keeping pace with Diana Pickler. Freshman Galaviz was a 400m runner in high school and is learning the intermediate hurdles.

"After six years of success in the 400m hurdles with Randi Smith and Monique Jessie, we don't have a proven person in this event so this is going to be a change for us," Sloan said. "We'll have to see how the multis do to see how far we pursue it. Our number one objective with them is the heptathlon."

## RELAYS

So many newcomers mandate a wait and see philosophy for the Cougar relays this year. Sloan thinks the potential is there to be pretty good but will require a concentrated amount of practice.

"We don't have all the raw speed for the 4x100m similar to what we have on the men's side so we will need to make real good stick passes and be very good at handing off the baton and receiving it," Sloan said.

In the 4x400m relay, Sloan is confident the Cougars will be competitive by putting together a team that may include both Picklers, Probasco-Canda along with Livingston or any others who demonstrate they can step into the event.

## JUMPS

The Cougar women will be well-represented in the high jump beginning with junior Robin Mikesch, back after two great seasons where she finished fourth and third at the Pac-10 Championships. After nearly reaching 5-9 last season, Mikesch should see continued improvement. At the 5-7 clearance height are Hanson and all the multi-events specialists.

The multi-events athletes also give the Cougars a good starting point and good depth in the long jump as all have reached distances around 19-feet. Burns has reached a best of 19-7 in the long jump. Coach Sloan looks for everyone to improve but likes the starting point for this season.

Triple jumper Kaylee Gardner had an outstanding freshman year in spite of being hurt part of it. She came on strong at the end of the season and scored at the conference meet, jumping a lifetime best of 39-2 1/4. Burns will come back in the triple jump with her best just over 40-feet and Sloan thinks this may be her best event.

Junior All-American pole vaulter Tamara Diles returns with a fit and healthy body that is showing rewards so far in the indoor training sessions.

"Tamara is already jumping well and we hope she stays healthy, continues to move forward, and get beyond where she was as a true freshman," Sloan said.

## THROWS

The strength of the Cougar throwing corps comes from the javelin with a pair of 150-foot throwers in senior team captain Rachel Bertholf and junior Jenna Dean. After scoring at the past two Pac-10 meets, Sloan and Coach Debra Farwell are looking forward to both of them getting out over 160-feet and maybe

over 50 meters this season. Heptathlete Miller will fill in when needed.

In the shot put, discus and hammer, redshirt freshman McKenzie Burgess and freshman Jessica Zita will be the frontline competitors. Burgess, who was a state discus and two-time state shot put champion in high school, moved to track after two seasons with the WSU volleyball team. She is very athletic and is expected to develop into a solid thrower in both events. The coaches look to develop Zita mostly as a weight and hammer thrower but she feels she can also contribute to the team in the discus and the shot.

## COMBINED EVENTS

The multi-events athletes are the cream of the crop for the 2005 Cougar women's team, led by redshirt sophomores Diana Pickler and Julie Pickler. Julie missed qualifying for the heptathlon at the 2004 NCAA Championships by a mere one point and Sloan has assured that will not happen again.

"We're going to be well-prepared and ready to go," Sloan said.

Junior transfer Katie Miller has been impressive in the fall training with her effort and her athleticism. Sloan is anticipating that she will develop into a fine heptathlete, making this a strong area in championship competition for the Cougs.

"We're counting on the versatility and strength of these three women to carry-over into some of the other areas as well," Sloan said.



Diana Pickler