



Liberty Men, Women Lead at BSC Indoor Track

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The Liberty men's and women's track & field teams both got off to a strong start at the 2012 Big South Indoor Track & Field Championships, Friday at Virginia Tech's Rector Field House. The Flames and Lady Flames both lead the team standings, and four Liberty individuals took home event titles during the meet's opening day.

Spurred on by individual conference championships by [Kolby Shepherd](#) (pole vault), [Ryan Smith](#) (weight throw) and [Kyle Wheeler](#) (high jump), the Liberty men's team racked up 75 points through Friday's six events. That puts the Flames 47 points clear of second-place Gardner-Webb, as Liberty chases its unprecedented 15th straight Big South indoor team title.

On the women's side, [Jennifer Klugh](#) led a Liberty 1-2-3 finish in the 3K final, highlighting the Lady Flames' successful day. Aiming for its third consecutive Big South team championship, Liberty leads rival Coastal Carolina, 81 to 31.5, through a half-dozen events.



Kolby Shepherd won the fourth Big South indoor men's pole vault title of his career on Friday, breaking his own meet record with a 16-5.25 clearance.

Men's Meet Recap

The Flames seized control of the men's team lead during the day's first field event, the pole vault. Liberty vaulters finished first, second, third and fifth, tallying 28 points for the event and marking the Flames' second 1-2-3 sweep of the indoor men's pole vault in the last three years.

Shepherd led the way, becoming the first four-time men's pole vault champion in meet history. His winning clearance of 16-5.25 eclipsed the redshirt senior's own meet record. [Cody Fridgen](#) and [Jon Drablos](#) both topped out at 15-4.5, finishing second and third, respectively. Freshman Matt Thompson contributed a fifth-place finish with his 13-11 effort.

Smith won the first Big South weight throw title of his career, becoming the first Liberty thrower since Jon Hart in 2008 to capture the event crown. His winning throw of 63-6.25 set a new personal best and enabled him to pass his coach, Clendon Henderson, for the No. 2 spot on Liberty's all-time weight throw performance list.

After two highly-decorated Liberty veterans had won conference titles, the Flames' third conference crown came from a freshman, Kyle Wheeler. His successful first-attempt clearance at 6-8.75 enabled the Texas native to edge Winthrop's Dexter Young for the championship on fewest misses. Wheeler also qualified for the IC4A meet in the process and moved up to No. 8 in program history.

Liberty got two more new IC4A qualifiers in the men's 3K final, where [Caleb Edmonds](#) finished second in 8:21.49 and [David Ricksecker](#) followed in fourth place at 8:24.33. Edmonds now ranks No. 8 in Liberty history and Ricksecker is No. 10.

Three Flames placed inside the top seven in the men's triple jump, helping Liberty record 10 team points in the event. [Aaron Johnson](#) topped the Liberty trio with his fourth-place finish and season-best leap of 46-0.75.

Liberty has won the Big South heptathlon title all six times the event has been contested, but [Tevan McIntire](#) will have his work cut out for him to extend the championship streak on Saturday. The redshirt freshman enters the final three events sitting in fourth place with 2,688 total points.

The Flames fared well in the 400-meter dash prelims, qualifying three athletes into Saturday's event final. Leading the way was [Leonard Robbins](#), whose time of 48.72 hit the IC4A standard and ranks No. 10 in program history. Robbins later went on to make the 200-meter dash final as well.

One last notable performance during the running event prelims came from [Paul Arslain](#) at 800 meters. He made the final after dropping more than a second off of his previous personal best. Arslain's time of 1:55.07 makes him the No. 9 runner in program history for the indoor 800.

Women's Meet Recap

Klugh's 3K victory on Friday marked the Lady Flames' fourth straight Big South title in the event, but it was the first time they have ever posted a sweep of all three podium positions. Klugh is now a back-to-back women's Big South 3K champion, after crossing the line in 10:03.29. Teammate [Jacy Christiansen](#) followed in second place at 10:09.43, while [Khristina Kanagy](#) earned the third spot with a personal-best 10:09.90 effort. Most importantly, the Lady Flames outscored Coastal Carolina in the event by a 24-3 margin.

The Lady Flames' distance runners contributed to another strong effort later on Friday evening, as [Katie Russo](#), [Kylie McMichael](#), [Meghan Burggraf](#) and [Betel Yosef](#) teamed up for a runner-up showing in the distance medley relay. The same quartet won this event last year and actually ran five seconds faster this time around, at 12:14.49. However, Campbell's meet-record time of 12:07.81 relegated Liberty to second.

Moving to the field events, [Melinda Bendik](#) and [Jocelyn Williams](#) each earned All-Big South honors in the weight throw. Bendik moved up from eighth to second during the finals, after posting a personal-best toss of 56-9.5. Williams placed third in this event for the second straight season, reaching 56-6.75 on her top effort of the evening.

Three Lady Flames placed in the top five of the women's triple jump, led by [Mia Aghaji](#) in second place. The redshirt senior reached an indoor personal-best 40-2.25, but fell just 0.5 inch shy of defending her conference title from 2011. [Alyssa Pegues](#) followed in fourth place at 38-11.5, while freshman [Melissa Rohwer](#) came in fifth at 38-6. Both Pegues and Rohwer's marks set new season bests.

Two other freshmen who performed well on Friday were the duo of [Audrey Bamford](#) and [Riley Brandon](#) in the pentathlon. Bamford scored a career-high 3,056 points for third place, finishing just four points ahead of Brandon, whose fourth-place point total of 3,052 was also a personal best.

In a deep women's pole vault competition, [Rachel Houseknecht](#) cleared 11-10, which was higher than teammate [Shelley Parker](#)'s winning vault of 11-9.75 from 2011. However, Houseknecht ended up in a tie for fourth place to lead the Lady Flames on Friday.

During Friday's running event preliminaries, the Lady Flames' best event was the 200-meter dash, where both [Olivia Charnuski](#) and [Abigail Flower](#) made the final. Flower's personal-best time of 24.94 seconds qualified her for the ECAC meet and ranks No. 2 (behind Charnuski) in program history.

Action will resume Saturday at 9 a.m., when the gun goes off for the heptathlon 60-meter hurdles. The first field event will be the women's high jump, set for a 9:45 a.m. start. Running events will begin in earnest at 11:30 a.m., with the men's mile.

Men's Team Standings (Through Six Events)

1) Liberty – 75

- 2) Gardner-Webb – 28
- 3T) Radford – 27
- 3T) VMI – 27
- 5) Winthrop – 24
- 6) Charleston Southern – 22
- 7) High Point – 20.5
- 8) Campbell – 9
- 9) UNC Asheville – 1.5

Women's Team Standings (Through Six Events)

1) Liberty – 81

- 2) Coastal Carolina – 31.5
- 3) Charleston Southern – 26
- 4) Gardner-Webb – 25
- 5) VMI – 20
- 6) Campbell – 14
- 7T) Radford – 13
- 7T) UNC Asheville – 13
- 9) High Point – 8
- 10) Winthrop – 2.5