



(Scroll down for Shepherd highlights.)

Liberty Wins 17 Events on Saturday

**April 3, 2010
Lynchburg, Va.**

Liberty took advantage of ideal weather conditions, Saturday at the Liberty Collegiate Invitational. The sunny, 80-degree weather and helpful tailwinds aided the Flames in posting 17 event victories, 5 new IC4A qualifiers and 4 new ECAC qualifiers during their first home meet of the season at the Matthes-Hopkins Track Complex.

Women's Meet Recap

The Lady Flames' mid-distance and distance runners enjoyed a stellar day, highlighted by Jaime Watson's outdoor season debut at 800 meters. The NCAA national qualifier at 800 meters indoors fought through swirling winds to qualify for the ECAC meet in 2:09.53. Her Liberty teammates also captured three of the next four spots in the event, including Rebekah Ricksecker's runner-up effort in a time of 2:15.97.

One week after posting a stellar 35:35 10K, Ashley Osborne stepped down in distance to the 1,500. The redshirt senior exhibited a nice finishing kick, chasing down Sacred Heart's Olivia Civardi in the homestretch, crossing the line in a winning time of 4:45.25.

Ricksecker later led off for Liberty's victorious 4 x 400 relay quartet, which consisted solely of distance runners. She was joined by Hailey Neal, Kristina Kanagy and Jennifer Klugh in posting a 4:08.68 to win by nearly four seconds in the afternoon's final race.

About eight hours earlier, Kanagy had been the first of two red-haired Liberty freshmen to notch a runner-up finish in a distance race on Saturday. Kanagy's 18:41.87 was good for second place in the women's 5K, while Taylor Bowles stopped the clock at 12:56.70 for the second spot in the women's steeplechase.

Senior Chenoa Freeman was Liberty's final event winner on the track, taking top honors in the 400-meter dash for the second time in her career at this meet. She fought off some adverse wind conditions and a talented field to claim victory in a season-best time of 56.04.

The Lady Flames boasted a pair of double event winners in the field disciplines, including redshirt sophomore Mia Aghaji. She won the Liberty Collegiate Invitational triple jump title for the third year in a row, with a 37-9.5 leap. Aghaji also prevailed in the long jump, as her personal-best 18-3 held off teammate and runner-up Melanie Sims' 17-9.

Melinda Bendik enjoyed some positive results at Liberty's new Campus East throwing facility, winning both the discus and hammer competitions by significant margins. Bendik finished almost nine feet in front of the next closest discus competitor, thanks to a personal-best and ECAC-qualifying toss of 142-9. She is now the No. 3 all-time discus thrower for the Lady Flames, after notching Liberty's best discus attempt since 1992.

Bendik's winning margin in the hammer throw was nearly 10 feet, as she came just three inches shy of her own school record. The junior's top mark measured 175-1.

Liberty's final two ECAC qualifications came in the heptathlon, where Krystle Matthews and heptathlon debutant Christina Mitchell swept the top two spots in the two-day, seven-event competition. Matthews scored a personal-best 4,751 points, after winning both the long jump (17-9) and javelin (115-5) on Saturday. Mitchell also fared well in the javelin, tossing the spear 115-1 on her way to a final score of 4,656.

A pair of Liberty newcomers notched runner-up finishes in the vertical jumps, including junior college transfer Marianne Wheeler and freshman Shelley Parker. Wheeler sailed over an outdoor personal-best 5-5 in the high jump, tying her for fifth in program history. Meanwhile, Parker set a new personal best in the pole vault at 11-7.75. Now the No. 4-ranked all-time women's pole vaulter at Liberty, Parker matched the winning height of Bridgewater's Christina Rhodes, but took second place on misses.

Men's Meet Recap

Liberty's sprinters and jumpers made the most of the wind conditions throughout the day on Saturday, but nowhere was the action more explosive than on the long jump runway. Competing directly in front of the patrons in the new Osborne Stadium seating area, numerous athletes posted impressive distances.

Leading the way was Allen Simms, as the former NCAA triple jump champion at USC posted the day's lone facility record with a 25-6 leap. Flames swept the next three spots, with all three marks exceeding the IC4A standard.

Long jump runner-up Clarence Powell (24-9.75) and third-place Anthony Bryant (24-3.5) both set new personal bests in their long jump season debuts, while fourth-place Oronde Vassell equaled his best mark at 23-7.25. Liberty now has five men's long jumpers who have qualified for the IC4A meet, a list which also includes Aaron Johnson and Kevin Reddington.

According to the most current information available at the time of this article, Powell's long jump is tied for sixth on the NCAA national list, while Bryant's mark is tied for 20th.

Bryant now also shares the 17th spot in the nation in the triple jump, after reaching a season-best 49-9.75 to win the event on Saturday. Aaron Johnson's personal-best 46-7.25 put him in second place behind Bryant.

The helpful breeze also pushed Roderick Spruel and Jacey Bailey to personal bests and IC4A qualifiers in the short sprints. Spruel was fourth with a 10.78 clocking in the 100, while Bailey claimed third place with his 21.41 time in the 200.

Liberty won both men's relay titles, with Spruel and Bailey bookending the victorious 4 x 100 squad. The duo was joined by Andre Washington and Vassell in a season-best 41.07 effort.

The 4 x 400 squad, which clocked a 3:22.24, consisted of Washington, Chris Herbst, Russell Allen and Taylor Courtney.

Courtney (53.69), Herbst (54.43), Chris Johnson (54.88) and Washington (56.22) posted a 1-2-3-4 Liberty sweep in the men's 400 hurdles event.

The Flames' other two victors on the track were sophomores Kyle Powers and Isaac Wendland. Powers' 9:58.24 posting in the 3,000-meter steeplechase enabled him to repeat as Liberty Collegiate Invitational steeplechase champion by 22 seconds. Wendland, running the 1,500 for only the second time in college, used a strong move in the final 200 meters to secure victory in 4:00.03.

Like Bendik on the women's side, redshirt freshman Ryan Smith found the Campus East throwing venue to his liking. He dominated the shot put competition by three feet, repeating as event titlist with a personal-best 56-1.75 heave. With his effort, Smith passes Liberty Head Strength and Conditioning Coach Bill Gillespie for third place in program history. Smith also climbed to No. 6 on Liberty's all-time hammer list, after finishing fourth in one of the day's most competitive events at 179-4.

Ryan Bell edged out teammate Elliot Galeone for top honors in the men's javelin, winning the event for the second year in a row at this meet. Bell's best mark of the day landed at 194-3, just four inches in front of Galeone's 193-11.

Both of Liberty's decathletes finished with significant personal bests. Geren Woodbridge posted Saturday's top

mark in the 110 hurdles (15.49), discus (135-2), pole vault (15-3) and javelin (178-4). However, he could not quite hold off Kyle Steiner in the 1,500 and finished second by just seven points, 7,119 to 7,112. However, Woodbridge's 144-point personal-best gives him an IC4A qualifier and a chance to improve upon his runner-up showing at the 2010 IC4A Championship.

Teammate Drew Edwards closed his decathlon competition with his customary strong 1,500, a 4:25.76. That effort wrapped up sixth place, and a 403-point personal best at 6,078 points.

Liberty's Cody Fridgen and Justin Savini each pole vaulted 15-3, sharing second place. They trailed only teammate Kolby Shepherd, who is redshirting this season. Shepherd thrilled the crowd on the far side of the track, clearing 17-0.75 for a new personal best and his second victory in the last three years at this meet.

The Flames' final runner-up on the day was Powell, who high jumped 6-6.25 in his season debut in the event. He finished behind former Liberty standout Matt Parker's winning clearance of 6-10.75.

Liberty will have one final meet to tune up for the 2010 Big South Outdoor Track & Field Championships. The Flames will travel across town to compete in Saturday's Merrill Lynch Track Classic, hosted by Lynchburg College. The one-day meet will get underway at 9 a.m.

Decathlon Final Results (12 Participants)

- 1) Kyle Steiner, Unattached – 7,119
- 2) Geren Woodbridge, Liberty – 7,112**
- 3) Steven Price, Baldwin-Wallace – 6,718
- 4) Keith Rowe, Sacred Heart – 6,287
- 5) Anya Uzoh, Penn State – 6,079
- 6) Drew Edwards, Liberty – 6,078**

Heptathlon Final Results (12 Participants)

- 1) Krystle Matthews, Liberty – 4,751**
- 2) Christina Mitchell, Liberty – 4,656**
- 3) Jessica Gibbs, Lynchburg – 4,272
- 4) Emily Oliver, Baldwin-Wallace – 4,130
- 5) Sarana Hyatt, Sacred Heart – 3,968