



NEWS RELEASE

TEMPE PREP CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN STRONG TRACK AND FIELD TEAMS

PHOENIX, AZ (April 15, 2009) – The uncharted waters of Class 2A await athletes from Tempe Preparatory Academy as the school moves up from Class 1A.

But that won't be until the next school year, and the girls and boys track and field teams have more pressing issues at hand, namely defending their state championships at the state meet May 15-16 at Mesa High School.

The girls are aiming for their fifth straight title, the boys their second.

"We want to finish strong," said girls coach Melissa Brittain.

Brittain said the program's success "has been a combination of a lot of things, mostly having a few strong athletes and deep teams that helped fill in a lot of gaps.

"This year, we are still good, but we might be a bit down in terms of numbers. That will mean more coaching and selectively placing the girls in the right spots."

The girls team suffered a key loss when Briana Prince, the champion at 200 and 400 meters, moved out of state.

But the team still has a big points-producer in senior Robyn Robledo the champion in the high jump, long jump and triple jump. She also is likely to run the 200, according to Brittain.

Other key athletes are junior hurdler Tyler Gaylor, sophomore sprinter Kayla Beene, senior hurdler Kelly Gilloon and freshman sprinter Sara Prokop.

Brittain said Beene is new to track this year, having previously participated in gymnastics, "and has taken to the sport well."

Gilloon is back after sitting out her junior season.

Sam Bryant leads the boys team.

He wants the team to build on what it accomplished last season and set the table for the move to 2A.

"This is a big deal for us," he said.

Due to the graduation of a number of seniors, the boys team might not have the same depth as it has in the past but expects to be competitive at the state meet, Bryant said.

Bryant will rely heavily on sophomore Rocky Brittain in the long jump, triple jump and sprints, junior Matt Rines in several events including the discus, and senior Steve Rachocki in the 800 and 1,600.

"It is not going to be easy, but we are capable of doing very well at the state meet. We need some people, beyond our main guys, to step up," Bryant said.

He wants his athletes to be in the proper frame of mind.

“I talked to them early on about it,” Bryant said. “We are an elite 1A program and we should start acting like it. We want them to have a swagger, but not be too overconfident.”

Tempe Prep does not have the athletic amenities of some schools. So the coaches and athletes must do the best they can with what they have.

The track teams do some of their work at a nearby park or as early as 5:30 a.m. at Mesa Community College. There is a covered weight-training area called the weight ramada just off the main parking lot of the school. It was put together with the assistance of the football team, which is coached by Brittain’s husband, Tom.

“It (weight facility) is like the Taj Mahal to us,” Melissa Brittain said.

“Some of our athletes are overachievers in many ways. That is due to their perseverance. If you can run hard in conditions that might not be as good as some, that will make it seem somewhat easier when you get to the track.

“We work hard and have a good time at our practices. There is a silver lining. I think that doing this together helps you appreciate it a lot more when you have the success. We’re just going to keep going.”

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