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DRAKE TURNS UNPREDICABLE

Minnesota's McGinnis Survives

Hello Again....In the decathlon world nothing has been more predictable than who wins at Drake. For the past generation, if your name was Janvrin or your affiliation was Northern Iowa, you took home the gold medal. In fact these individuals had captured 19 of the previous 24 Drake crowns. *You could call it in.* Janvrin's tenure at Drake was so long that he was inducted into their Hall of Fame ten years before he retired. And so, in 2010, with defending champ Mat Clark, Northern Iowa '09, in the field, more of the same was expected. Then something unforeseen happened. When the starter's pistol went up this past week all tradition went out the window and this year's meet had more turns than a Grand Prix auto race.

Drake was the week's only major ten-eventer and a sizeable field, 21, started. For most of the first day the focus was on the superlative performances (4 event PRs) of Iowa senior Dan Rolling. The Milford, IA art major appeared well on his way to an upset with a first day total just 4 digits short of 3900 points. "Who's Dan Rolling," most asked as he led by 25 at the break. The favorites: Clark, '08 Big Ten champ Frank Shotwell of Michigan, 2x NAIA champ Jonathan Hilton (ex Oklahoma Baptist where he now coaches) and Minnesota senior RJ McGinnis (last year's runner-up) were scattered in Rolling's wake.

But the Iowa senior, who looked like a shoo-in for an NCAA qualifying score, fell

apart on the second day and the favorites made a run. The first to fall apart was Hilton, himself on pace for a 7500+ USA qualifying score (to be held, ironically, at Drake in late



Minnesota senior RJ McGinnis was not spectacular at Drake, but his steady 10 event performance fashioned a 7319 point victory, 35 up on teammate Jack Szmanda.

June). His discus effort (30.40m/99-9) came up nearly 11 meters (and 220 points) off his best and an opportunity to have the first NAIA winner at Drake since Graceland's Bruce Jenner in 1975, evaporated. To Hilton's credit, he soldiered on and placed 3rd with a 7276 score.

Then to the vault which claimed two more of the favorites. Even with their conservative opening heights, Clark (opened

at 4.10m/13-5¼ with PR 4.95m/16-2¾) and Shotwell (opened at 4.20m/13-9¼, PR of 4.90m/16-¾) were soon history. That left



McGinnis who

Dan Rolling, a senior at Iowa, used PRs in all first day events but the high jump, to lead at the break with 3896 points.



managed just 4.10m/13-5¼, but it was enough to assure him the win. Almost! Charging hard was Gopher teammate Jack Szmanda who has terrific vault skills (PR 5.10m/16-8¾). Szmanda, 20, a redshirt freshman from Wausau, WI, was in his first decathlon. He cleared 5.00m/16-4¾ here and missed 3x at 5.10m/16-¾, a bar that would have provided an opportunity for the win. As it was he pushed hard running 4:35.48 in the 1500m with McGinnis hanging on for dear life. Szmanda could only make up 5 points and McGinnis had his win. Perfect...for it was his 23rd birthday.

RJ McGinnis is a survivor. Even though his score was more than 300 shy of his runner-up effort a year ago, when the dust cleared, the Burnsville, MN senior was one of the few athletes still standing.

Northern Iowa's soph Dan Gooris was 4th at 7229 and former D-III star Ben Dillow (George Fox) was 5th at 7217.

McGinnis and Shotwell (who placed 13th here with 6708) will be co-favorites for the Big Ten title in 3 weeks in Bloomington, IN. The Big Ten is so deep that it produced 15 performers over 5000 at its indoor heptathlon. This meet which will also provide

a last chance for an NCAA qualifying score for Ohio State super frosh Heath Nickles (who was entered but did not start at Drake), Minnesota's Joey Schwecke (who placed 6th here in 7167), a trio of Wisconsin Badgers and, of course, Dan Rolling.



A trio who lost a chance at the Drake Relays title included: Michigan's Frank Shotwell (left), '09 winner Mat Clark (center), and ex Oklahoma Baptist's Jon Hilton (right).

Winners of other meets during the week included: Matt Waters/Fresno City College who posted the season's top JC score (6637) at the NorCal meet in Sacramento; Philip Noble/Utah State, who won the BYU Robison meet; Adam Salzmann/Colorado, who won the Glenn Morris meet in Fort Collins; and a pair of winners at smallish Relay meets- Tom Fitzsimons/Mt St Mary's (7036) who won at Penn and Josh Kettlewell /Central Michigan, the victor at Gina in Hillsdale, MI.

The next three weeks constitute the Collegiate Conference section of the schedule. Next week starts slowly with just 15 conference affairs, many of them D-III. The major D-I meet will be the Big East Champs in Cincinnati.