

THE DECATHLON ASSOCIATION

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CLARK KEEPS DRAKE TITLE IN FAMILY

Another Victory for Close-Knit Group

Hello Again....In April the weather is always the story. And so at this year's Drake Relays decathlon all eyes were on the sky and ears tuned to weather forecasts. For part of the mid-west and a good deal of the US southeast tornado sightings/warnings had millions nervous. We were hardly immune at my hometown in Maryland. When *The Weather Channel* announced a tornado warning for my town...."you folks in Emmitsburg, take indoor shelter immediately," the realization that there were bigger issues than decathlon scores was driven home....immediately. And this was just one week after a flood hit my town. *This has been one tough spring!*

I kept my eye on the weather in Iowa for Wed-Thurs (27th-28th) and it was less than ideal for decent decathlon scores. Nevertheless nothing stops the Drake Relays and 14 went to the starting line at noon on Wednesday. It is demanding to sprint when the temperature is 46 degrees. A single athlete broke 11 seconds as the winds swirled....-0.5 mps in one race, +2.8 mps in the next. The temps reached a high of 54 degrees on Wednesday and when the first five events ended Central (IA) Ethan Miller (junior, Seymour, IA) held a 12 point lead over 2009 champ Mat Clark, 3860-3848.

The weather was not much better on Thursday, 55 at noon with a high of 61. Clark ran a horrendous hurdle race (16.21) as former NCAA III star Todd Wildman and former NAIA champion Jon Hilton starred, getting 14.51 and 14.75 clockings. But Clark



Section 2 of the Drake Relays 100m found, (l-r) Cliff Miller/Michigan State, Todd Wildman/unat, Jake Arnold/Asics, Mat Clark/unat, John Hilton/unat and Ted Rud/North Dakota St. Clark won in 11.14 seconds.

chipped away and held the lead after a PR javelin. He needed to run 4:25.63 for a USA provisional score of 7500 points and, normally this would not present a problem to him since he has clocked 4:12.60 and has 7 sub 4:20 performances. But the temps and strong winds made it nearly impossible to push the pace and he struggled in at.... 4:25.58.... and registered exactly a 7500 point score. Whew.

Behind him Michigan State's Cliff Miller (7202), Hilton (7141) and Miller (7134) all posted totals that were intrinsically worth 200 more points. Miller's score was the season's leading D-III effort and a Central school record. The performance of the meet may have been Dan Gooris' 5.05m/16-6³/₄ vault. Wildman, 2x D-III indoor pentathlon champ,



Mat Clark, who now trains in Fayetteville, won a 2nd Drake Relays crown, this time with 7500 points in less than ideal weather conditions.

Drake Relay Decathlon Wins...The Group	
Kip Janvrin	87,88,89,90,92,95,96,97,98,99,00,01,02,03,05
Travis Geopfert	04,06
Raven Cepeda	07
Joe Detmer	08
Mat Clark	09,11

getting accustomed to ten events, was 8th in a PR 6864.

National decathlon champ Jake Arnold opened his outdoor campaign here and used it as a test of fitness. He competed in three events each day: 11.45 100m, 13.71m/44-11 3/4 shot and 52.36 400m; 15.10 hurdles, 42.43m/139-2 disc and 58.53m/192-0.

Clark's win kept the title within a small group of interrelated coaches and athletes who have won 21 of the last 25 Drake Relay crowns. Kip Janvrin won 15 titles (last win was 2005) dating to 1987 and served as Travis Geopfert's coach. Geopfert won in '04 and '06 and his student at Northern Iowa, Rave Cepeda won in '07. Clark, who was Cepeda's teammate under Geopfert at UNI won in 2009 and again this year. His former training partner Joe Detmer was the '08 winner. Among them they have 21 Drake Relays watches. 21! Will somebody break up this group!



Ethan Miller, a junior at Central College, IA, posted the top D-III seasonal score, 7134.

Clark, a Northern Iowa grad who grew up in Ames, 30 miles to the north and who now trains with Geopfert in Fayetteville, said "I'm real happy I got through it." "It doesn't get any better than this. I won it two years ago and I was pretty disappointed last year when I no-heighted in the vault. But I skipped some meets in Arkansas so I could come back here and take my risks with the weather here. Because there's nothing that beats the feeling."

When asked about the decathlon lineage starting with Janvrin he responded "We just realized a few days ago that for so long the people that have won this is a very



small group of people that know each other pretty well. Part of my motivation for coming back here was I wanted to bring it back to the group.”

He continued, “I had kind of a rough first day. I felt really rusty. This is my first meet all year. Usually at this point, I would have had a whole indoor season and part of an outdoor season. I just felt rusty, but I got through it pretty well. I knew today I didn’t have to come here and drill anything. I just had to get through it and not worry about any kind of injuries and do what I need to do.”

The remainder of the nation offered little in the way of decathlon news. The Penn Relays drew 5 entrants (!5!) and was won by Marcos Sanchez of Puerto Rico (7178) as 3 exceeded 6000 points. Tim Reynolds of Central Michigan was the Gina Relay’s winner at Hillsdale, MI (6473), while Nathan Stephens/Alabama A&M (SWAC) and Jake Nichols/McDaniel (Centennial) won league meets.

The major news will come in the next two weeks when 34 conferences (D-I,II,III, NAIA and JUCO) offer decathlon competitions to nearly 500 athletes who will position themselves for national qualifying.

This was week/weekend more about **weather**...tough to cover the sport while hunkered down in one’s basement.