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(Neb.)-Eagles get off to strong start at RMAC Meet

By: Andrew Lacy Posted at: 05/06/2013 11:52 PM

The Chadron State College track and field team had what head coach Ryan Baily called "a great day" Monday at the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference Championships being hosted by Colorado School of Mines.

The Chadron State men had three athletes place in four events while ranking near the top of the team standings at the end of the day. The CSC women also did well in several events, particularly the shot put where they grabbed four of the eight places.

One of the two Eagles to earn a gold medal Monday was Baily's cousin, sophomore Hunter Dittbenner of Mitchell. He won the decathlon by scoring a career-best 5,911 points. That was four more points than runner-up Cameron Morley of Colorado Mesa compiled.

Actually, the outcome boiled down to just three seconds. Entering the last of the 10 events in the decathlon, Morley held a 14-point lead over Dittbenner. But when Dittbenner ran the 1500 meters in 4:50.47, it was three seconds faster than Morley ran the event and it earned the CSC entry 616 points while Morley gained 598.

Dittbenner is the third Chadron State athlete to win the RMAC decathlon. The first was Baily in 2001 and the second was Brad Gamble in 2011. Gamble is now a CSC assistant coach and is the team's primary tutor in the multi-events.

The Eagles' Jazz Bozner placed third in the decathlon with 5,896 points, just 16 fewer than Dittbenner. In addition, the Eagles' Sean Munger was fifth with 5,769 points.

CSC's other first place winner was senior Cody Hunt, who successfully defended the shot put championship that he won last year by eclipsing the 60-foot mark for the first time this season. His winning throw measured 60 feet, 9 ¼ inches. The Lingle-Fort Laramie High graduate and three-time All-American at CSC also has won two RMAC indoor shot put titles to go with his two outdoor crowns.

Another of the Eagles, Charith Kapukotuwa, finished second in the shot with a season-best throw of 54-7 and Kyle McCarthy placed seventh at 48-6.

Kapukotuwa also was third in the hammer throw with a mark of 157-8, just three inches shy of his season best. Tanner Rien was sixth at 155-0 and McCarthy was seventh again at 153-1.

The Chadron State men also grabbed three placings in the triple jump, where senior Lanar Newman was fourth with a career-best mark of 47-4 ¼. Karl McFarlane was fifth at 45-10 ½ and Xavier Kvistad, who was sixth with a career-best 45-7 ¼.

Freshman Mel Herl led the Lady Eagles in the shot put by placing second at 44-11 ½. Veteran Alyssa Norton was third at 42-11 ½ while teammates Cyndi Young and Sadie Waugh claimed fifth and seventh, respectively.

Norton also was third in the hammer throw at 156-3. Also earning a bronze medal was senior Kealie Jelden, who went 11-11 in the pole vault to improve her school record by one-fourth inch.

In addition, Chelsea Murray was fifth for the Eagles in the heptathlon.

The meet continues today. Baily said he Eagles should have another good day after about a dozen team members qualified for the finals in the sprints and the hurdles during Monday's preliminaries.