

## Des Moines Prepares For USA Outdoor Championships

**(EDITOR'S NOTE: This preview lists anticipated athletes expected to compete at USA Outdoor Championships. Watch for additional names of more Olympians competing in the near future.)**

In less than two months all eyes around the world will be focused on Des Moines when it hosts the U.S. Outdoor Track and Field Championships July 25-28.

With the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics right around the corner, venerable Drake Stadium will never see a bigger array of the nation's top track and field superstars in its history than the hundreds of athletes who will converge on the blue oval.

The U.S. Championships will feature more than 95 Olympians who have won a total of 47 Olympic medals including **20** gold, two world record holders and 15 current American record holders not to mention a bevy of NCAA champions setting the stage for the GREATEST track and field meet ever held in Iowa.

The top three place winners in each event will represent Team USA at the World Championships in Doha, Qatar Sept. 27-Oct. 6.

It's the first leg highlighting the year-round quest of Team USA athletes to compete at the Olympic Games.

Individual and all session tickets for the U.S. Outdoor Championships are on sale by contacting the Drake Athletic Ticket Office at 515-271-3647 or online at [www.draketix.com/usatf](http://www.draketix.com/usatf)

Count on several native Iowans challenging for national titles. 2016 Olympian **Shelby Houlihan**, a native of Sioux City, returns to defend her outdoor title in the women's 5,000 for the third straight year.

The 25-year-old Houlihan owned 2018, and she did so across two distances -- 1,500 and 5,000 -- while possessing perhaps the most lethal kick of any female distance runner in the world, becoming the second women ever to win both the 1,500 and 5,000 at the same U.S. Outdoor Championships since 2003. Houlihan ran a personal best of 3:57.34 in the 1500 at Lausanne, Switzerland, which ranked second in the world last year. Two weeks later she set the existing American record in the 5,000 of 14:34.45 in Heusden, Belgium, July 21.

Five-time NCAA champ **Karissa Schweizer**, a former West Des Moines Dowling Catholic prep standout, is expected to also run in the women's 5,000.

**Jenny Simpson**, reigning Olympic bronze medalist in the 1500 as well as former World Outdoor champ (2011), is expected to compete in the women's 1,500. Born in Webster City, Ia., the three-time Olympian has combined to win 11 U.S. indoor and outdoor national titles.

Since her first competition at Drake Stadium at the 2008 NCAA Championships, Simpson has won 10 out of 12 races, which she attributes to the family, friends and the great atmosphere.

"I race so much all over the world and so this [running at Drake] is a really great opportunity to race in front of my family," said Simpson. "So to be in the Midwest and have so much family within driving distance, my parents often rally a small army to come cheer me on. It's always a lot of fun to see those multi-generational groups showing up at the stadium together."

Iowa City resident **Erik Sowinski**, a three-time U.S. Indoor champ, will be among top contenders in the men's 800 after placing third last year. 2016 Olympic bronze medalist Clayton Murphy is back to defend his title. Murphy ranks No. 3 on the U.S. all-time list at 1:42.93 when he became the first American to medal in the 800 at the Olympics since 1992.

### Fourth Time Drake Stadium Has Hosted Nationals

If past history is any indication, track and field fans should be in store for some memorable moments on and off the track at U.S. Outdoor Track and Field Championships.

This will mark the fourth time Drake Stadium has served as the host of the USA Outdoor Track and Field Championships, including the second consecutive year.

Each time fans have witnessed a bevy of American records. Two American women's records were set the first time Drake hosted the U.S. Championships in 2010, including 2005 World Outdoor Championships silver medalist Chaunte Lowe setting an American record in the women's high jump with a clearance of 6 feet 8.75 inches on her final attempt.

Three American records were set during the Saturday session of the 2013 U.S. Championships:

Brianna Rollins, women's 100 hurdles record (12.26); Amanda Bingson, women's hammer throw (248-5), Michelle Carter, women's shot put (66-5)

In all 16 Drake Stadium records, including nine in the women's division, were set at the 2013 U.S. Outdoor Track & Field Championships.

Last year athletes set one American record (women's hammer throw), three world leads (men's 100, women's 20k race walk and women's hammer throw), two USA Championship records (women's triple jump, women's 20,000m race walk) and 13 Drake Stadium records over the course of four days.

Many seasoned and successful veterans of the sport will look to continue their legacies. Fifteen current American record holders are set to compete, including 12 in the women's division.

Eleven gold medalists from the 2016 Olympic games are expected to compete led by **Matthew Centrowitz** who became the first American since 1908 to capture a gold medal in the men's 1,500. Centrowitz will be trying to become just the second runner in U.S. history to earn his sixth men's 1500-meter national title joining Steve Scott, who won six championships between 1977 and 1986.

**Ryan Crouser**, who set an Olympic record en route to winning the gold medal in 2016 at 73-10.75, will compete in the men's shot put. The men's and women's long jump will feature 2016 Olympic gold medalists **Jeff Henderson** and **Tianna Bartoletta**, respectively.

Bartoletta captured the long jump at the 2005 and 2015 World Outdoor Championships, while earning gold medals for Team USA in the 4x100 relay at the 2012 and 2016 Olympics. Henderson will seek his fourth U.S. Outdoor title.

### World Record Holders To Run Hurdles

After missing the 2018 U.S. Outdoor Championships, **Dalilah Muhammad** is expected to seek her fourth career title in the women's 400 hurdles. Muhammad, who won the gold medal at the 2016 Olympics, will receive a strong challenge from **Shamier Little**, who set a Drake Stadium record of 53.61 en route to winning the title, while posting the second fastest time in the world in 2018.

Both the men's and women's short hurdles will feature world record holders **Aries Merritt** and **Kendra Harrison** with the finals expected to be another photo finish.

Merritt set the existing world record of 12.80 in Brussels, Belgium, a month after winning the gold medal at the 2012 Olympics. 2016 Olympian **Devon Allen** returns to defend his title in the 110 hurdles after edging six-time NCAA champ **Grant Holloway** 13.452 to 13.454 last year.

Holloway closed out the 2019 indoor season by winning his second career NCAA Indoor title in the 60 hurdles in an American record 7.35.

Harrison is the two-time defending champion in the women's 100 hurdles and was ranked No. 1 in the world last year in 12.36 followed by **Brianna McNeal** at 12.38. Harrison set the world record of 12.20 in 2016. But she didn't make the U.S. Olympic team, watching from the sidelines as Team USA swept the top three places in the women's 100 hurdles at 2016 Olympics – the first time by any nation in the event and the first time in any women's event for Team USA in Olympic history.

**Brianna Rollins** won the gold medal at Rio De Janiero with **Nia Ali** earning the silver and **Kristi Castlin** the bronze. The trio is expected to run in the U.S. Championships with Rollins seeking her third career title.

The last time a country pulled off a sweep of the gold medal in the men's 100, 200 and 400 at the World Championships occurred in 2007 by Team USA. The U.S. has the personnel to do it once again.

### World's Best Featured In Men's Sprints

American men topped the world lists in the 100, 200 and 400 in 2018 led by **Christian Coleman**, **Noah Lyles**, and **Michael Norman**. This trio could soon combine to dominate the sprints in ways not seen since before the Usain Bolt era, translating spectacular 2018 campaigns into gold at this year's World Championships

Americans posted the top four times in the world in the 100 in 2018. And those sprinters will be competing on the blue oval at Drake Stadium.

Coleman, who earned a silver medal in the 100 at the 2017 World Championships, will go for a sprint 100-200 double at the U.S. Championships setting the stage for a run at gold in both the World Championships and 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The decision to run the 100 and 200 assures the U.S. Championships of a major showdown in both events. **Justin Gatlin**, the reigning king after beating rival Usain Bolt at the 2017 World Championships, and indoor bronze medalist **Ronnie Baker**, will likely be Coleman's opponents in the 100 and Lyles in the 200.

The 22-year-old Coleman won the 60 at the 2018 World Indoor Championships and scorched a world-leading 9.79 in the 100 in Brussels, Belgium on Aug. 21, good for seventh all-time. He set the American indoor record in the 60 of 6.34 seconds winning the 2018 U.S. Indoor Championships.

Gatlin was the 2004 Olympic champion in the 100 as well as the 2005 and 2017 World champion in the same event. He also earned a silver medal in the 100 at the 2016 Olympic and a bronze medal in the 200 at the 2004 Olympics and 100 at the 2012 Olympics. Baker ranked second in the world in the 100 last year with a top time of 9.87.

At 20, **Lyles** became the youngest man in 34 years to win the 100 at the 2018 U.S. Championships, setting two Drake Stadium records and two world leads in the semifinals and finals, winning in 9.88, which ranked No. 3 in the world. He also was undefeated in the 200 last year capturing back-to-back Diamond League titles while recording the world's fastest time of 19.65. The 200 also features two-time defending outdoor champ **Ameer Webb** along with three-time NCAA champion **Elijah Hall**.

Norman, 21, is the sprinter to beat in the 400 after running a world-leading and collegiate record 43.61 en route to winning the 2018 NCAA outdoor title for USC.

## Strong Steeplechase

This is a huge year for the top U.S. steeplechasers. Defending world champion **Emma Coburn** and 2017 silver medalist and American record holder **Courtney Frerichs** both look to recapture their London magic at the World Championships in Doha while also battling each other again for the women's American record, while **Evan Jager** will seek the two elements still missing from his illustrious resume: a gold medal and a sub-8:00 performance.

The battle for American supremacy between Coburn and Frerichs is a fantastic storyline. **Coburn** claimed her fifth consecutive national title en route to a Drake Stadium record time of 9:17.70 last year, while **Frerichs** was second in 9:18.69, Coburn has been the face of the event in the U.S. for nearly a decade (winning seven national titles since 2011), but Frerichs very nearly became the sixth woman in history to break 9:00 with her 9:00.85 American record last July.

**Jager** has won seven U.S. Outdoor titles in the steeplechase, while earning a silver medal at the 2016 Olympics. He has been knocking on the sub-8:00 door ever since his unforgettable 8:00.45 American record in 2015.

**Sam Kendricks** is the reigning World Outdoor champion in the men's pole vault and has won every indoor and outdoor USA Championship since his first outdoor title in 2014. The 2016 Olympic bronze medalist made it five USA Outdoor Championships in a row with his Drake Stadium record vault of 19-2.25 last year.

### **Wilson Seeks 3<sup>rd</sup> Straight Women's 800 Title**

The first running event final – 10,000 meters – on July 25 at the U.S. Championships are expected to feature American record holders **Galen Rupp** and **Molly Huddle** in their respective men's and women's divisions. Rupp, owner of 11 U.S. national titles, won a silver medal in the 10,000 at the 2012 Olympics while capturing a bronze medal in the marathon at the 2016 Olympics. He set the American record in the 10,000 of 26:44.36 in 2014. Huddle set the current U.S. record of 30:13.17 at the 2016 Olympics.

**Lopez Lomong**, who last won back-to-back national titles in 2009 and 2010 in the 1500, also will return to defend his men's 10,000 title.

2016 Olympic silver medalist **Paul Chelimo** will seek his third men's 5,000 outdoor title in a row.

After having a baby in June of 2018, three-time Olympian **Shannon Rowbury** has returned to the track hoping to make her presence in the 1500 where she holds the American record of 3:56.29.

2016 Olympian **Ajee' Wilson** will be seeking her third straight women's 800 title after setting a Drake Stadium record of 1:58.18 last year. Wilson posted the U.S. outdoor record of 1:55.61 in 2017 and then rewrote the American indoor mark of 1:58.60 at the 2019 Millrose Games.

Fans should expect another captivating battle in the women's long jump between 2016 Olympian **Keturah Orji** and American record holder **Tori Franklin** where the Drake Stadium record fell three times last year. Orji entered the 2018 U.S. Outdoor meet owning a 7-0 career record vs. Franklin in head-to-head competition. Orji leapt to a facility record on her first jump at 47-0.75. Franklin set the USATF Outdoor record and Drake Stadium record on her first jump at 47-6.25 leap. Orji responded with a winning jump of 47-10.5, clinching the national title.

### **American Record Holders Set To Defend Titles In Women's Field Events**

2016 Olympic silver medalist **Sandi Morris** will be seeking her third straight title in the women's pole vault. Morris, the American record holder at 16-4  $\frac{3}{4}$ , will renew her rivalry with **Jenn Suhr**, the 2012 Olympic gold medalist and world indoor record holder, who has won 10 U.S. outdoor titles.

All four of the women's throwing events— discus, shot put, hammer throw, and javelin— will feature the American record holder in competition.

Three-time Olympian **Michelle Carter** set the American record in the shot put at 67 feet 8  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches at the 2016 Olympics en route to becoming the first U.S. woman ever to win the gold medal.

Eight-time U.S. champ and three-time Olympian **Kara Winger** set the existing American mark in the javelin of 218-8 at the 2010 U.S. Championships at Drake Stadium.

2016 Olympian **DeAnna Price** returns to defend her crown in the hammer throw after setting an American record of 256-3 last year at Drake Stadium, which was also the best in the world in 2018. 2012 Olympian **Gia Lewis-Smallwood** is the American record holder in the discus at 226-11.

Catch rising women's stars in **Sydney McLaughlin**, who competed in the 2016 Olympic 400 hurdles at the age of 16, along with 21-year-old **Vashti Cunningham**, a two-time defending USA Outdoor high jump champ as well as four-time reigning USA Indoor champ. McLaughlin won the 2018 NCAA 400 hurdles as a freshman at Kentucky before turning pro. Earlier she set the collegiate record of 52.75 in the event. Cunningham competed in the 2016 Olympics and won the 2015 World Indoor Championship high jump as a 17-year-old.

2016 Olympian **Zach Ziemek** returns to defend his decathlon title, while **Erica Bougard** also is seeking her second straight crown in the heptathlon.

Coburn, Gatlin and Kendricks are among eight athletes from Team USA who are reigning 2017 IAAF World Outdoor Champion, receiving an automatic wild-card bye into the World Championships for their respective events. Others are **Tori Bowie**, women's 100; **Phyllis Francis**, women's 400; **Kori Carter**, women's 400 hurdles; **Brittney Reese**, women's long jump and **Christian Taylor**, men's triple jump.

Taylor is a two-time defending Olympic champ and American record holder (49-8  $\frac{3}{4}$ ). Reese won the gold medal in the 2012 Olympics along with a silver in 2016.