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## Huskers face tough competition at Drake Relays this weekend

By Steve Thomas Staff Reporter

All of the ingredients - quality competition and top notch facilities - will be there for the Nebraska men's and women's track teams at the Drake Relays Friday and Saturday.

But Coach Gary Pepin said his team may need some help from Mother Nature to qualify athletes for the NCAA Outdoor Championships.

"Everything is in the competitors' favor at this meet," Pepin said. "It's late in the year and people are getting down to business; the people and the facilities are good, but the weather will have a lot to say about our chances at qualifying

Pepin said the Drake Relays draws a sellout crowd of 18,000 spectators each year and is one of the nation's most competitive meets. The strength of the competition may cause some improvement in times.

"This will be the toughest outdoor competition we have run in this season," Pepin said. "It comes at a good time because it's that time of year when you really need to get rolling. Hopefully we will see some of our best times.'

Even though the Big Eight Championships are on the heels of this weekend's meet, Pepin said the Drake Relays are not a good indicator of what to expect in later meets.

"There are not a whole lot of individual events at the Drake Relays," Pepin said. "You get a chance to see your people in a lot of relays and

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you make your judgments from that. The qualifications to run at Drake are pretty rigid."

The shortage of individual events may not keep Nebraska's men from turning in a solid performance. Pepin said he looks for good things from the 4 X 1600 meter relay team composed of Gerard O'Callaghan, Mark Perlinger, Kurt Russell, and Jean Verster.

"This is an event we are really trying to win," Pepin said. "These competitors — along with Kurt Russell in the 3,000 meter steeplechase -should have legitimate chances of winning."

Coming off a fine showing in the Kansas Relays, Pepin said he looks for high jumpers Jeff Loescher and James Blackledge to do well.

On the women's side, Pepin said the 4 X 400 meter relay team should be strong. Pepin also has high hopes for sprinter Angela Thacker and triple jumper Sha-ri Pendleton.

"Angela should have a good shot at winning the 100 meters unless they bring in an Olympian or something," Pepin said. "She and Sha-ri (Pendleton) were outstanding at the Kansas Relays.'

Pendleton turned in her best triple jump of the year at the Kansas Relays and Thacker took second in the 200 meters and won the 100

Pepin said long jumpers Anthony Bailous and Thacker will not jump this weekend. Bailous has an injured foot, and Thacker is making progress after a leg injury. Pepin said he expects both to be ready for the Big Eight Championships.

### Johnson has enjoyed years at Nebraska

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A Lincoln native, Johnson said he's glad he chose to attend Nebraska.

"I looked at other colleges, but I like Nebraska because it was so close," he said. "I was also familiar with the program, and I thought it would be exciting to start out with a new coach (Kerry McDermott, the current Husker coach).'

Johnson said he'll miss the friendships that have developed between the members of the team, but won't miss the traveling and absences cause by being an athlete.

"One of the things I've learned from playing tennis here is discipline-how to budget my time to get all of my schoolwork done and tests completed in advance," he said. "You have to learn to integrate athletics and school."

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