

Women use indoor track season to hone outdoor skills



Sophomore Amy Salek sprints around the track during an indoor track meet at Liberty University last season.

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Assistant Sports Editor

On a hot September day, athletes from Elon University began training for the indoor track season, which will finally launch Thursday for most of the team.

For the past three months, the members of the team have been training Monday through Friday and lifting weights three days a week, head coach Mark Elliston said.

"We've been getting out there, running against the clock, jumping and hurdling, to get ready for the season," Elliston said.

The first indoor track meet for the Phoenix takes place Thursday, when the team travels to Lynchburg, Va., for the Liberty Kick-Off. This will be the only meet the team has before heading home for the winter holidays.

The season continues until the Southern Conference Championship on Feb. 25 and 26 in Clemson, S.C.

There are two track seasons, the indoor and the outdoor, and each is distinct.

"It's a different breathing atmosphere because it's all air being circulated instead of the air outside, which is harder," junior distance runner Emily Fournier said.

Because the team competes under a roof for this season, it does not have to deal with the weather, Elliston said. It is always dry, and the competitors do not ever have to struggle with the wind.

"It's the true test of an athlete," Fournier said. "There are no environmental conditions holding

you back — no wind or rain and no hills."

There are also logistical differences between the indoor and outdoor seasons. The track itself is smaller at indoor meets, measuring 200 meters instead of 400 at outdoor tracks.

The 100 meter and 110 meter hurdles, the 10,000 meter run, the 3,000 meter steeplechase, the 400 meter hurdles and the javelin, hammer and discus throws do not take place indoors.

While differences exist between the two seasons, one ultimately leads into the other.

"We're going to use the indoor season to get ready for the outdoor season," Elliston said.

Last year, the Phoenix indoor track team placed seventh in the SoCon with 36 points.

The team finished 175 points behind SoCon leader Appalachian State University.

Elliston said he expects to at least finish in fourth or fifth place in the SoCon, but hopes to do even better.

"I'm really hoping that we come together as a team and do a little bit better than we did last year," Elliston said. "We want to break into the top-three, compete hard and stay healthy."

Fournier said the team has high expectations for the season. She said the distance team is looking to contribute more this season than last, when it was plagued with injuries.

There are 12 to 15 girls who can compete on the distance team, and not many girls who contributed

TRANSITIONING FROM CROSS COUNTRY TO INDOOR TRACK

The meet on Thursday will not be the first for 19, just less than half, of the women on the indoor track team. These competitors make up the entire women's cross country team.

Elliston said there are distance events at the indoor track meets and the competitors are expected to come from the cross country team.

"Obviously, that's their specialty," Elliston said. "That's what they do."

Junior Emily Fournier, one of the women who is making the transition from cross country to indoor track, said that training for competitions during the cross country season helps in the indoor track season.

"It builds a huge base for us — all the miles that we train for cross country and all the hill workouts," Fournier said. "There may not be any hills on the track, but it still makes you a stronger runner."

points to the team graduated after last season, Fournier said.

"We had a very young team and we are going to come back stronger than we were last year," Fournier said.

Both Fournier and Elliston agreed the first test for the team will be at the Liberty Kick-Off.

"This meet is just going to let us see where we are," Elliston said. "It'll give them a good idea of how much work they need to do for the rest of the season."

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