

PA's Stephanie Brown Trafton & Kim Conley on their Day 2 Events

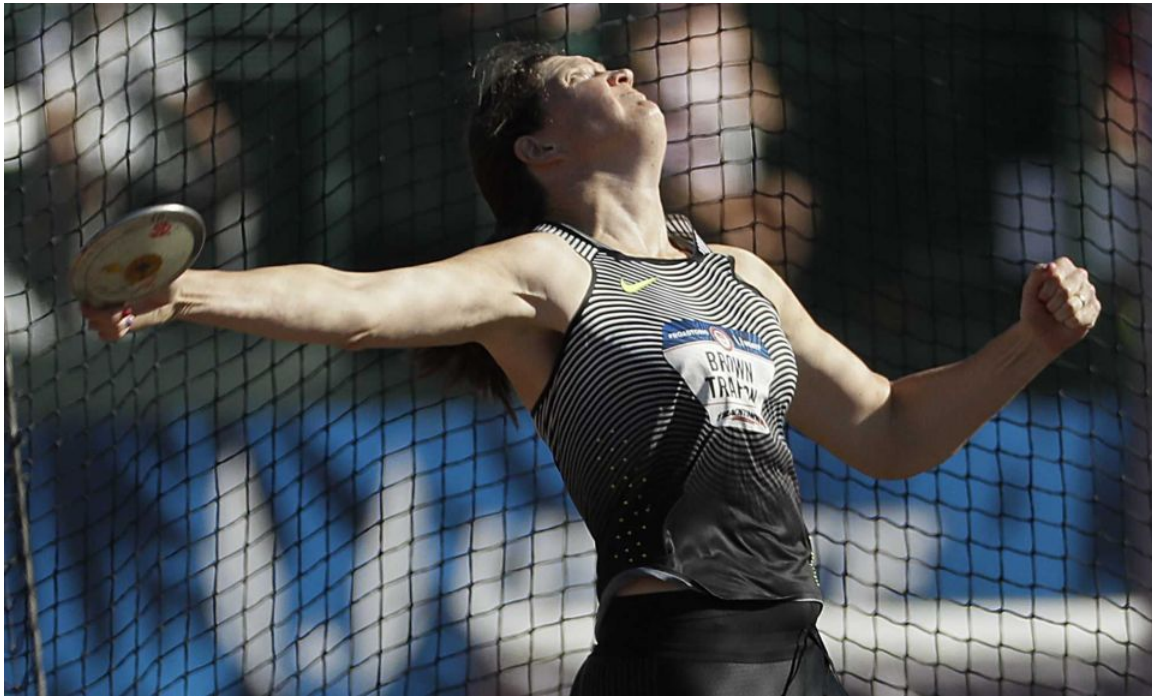
By Bob Burns

EUGENE, Ore.

At virtually the same moment that Stephanie Brown Trafton came up short on her final throw in the discus, leaving the 2008 Olympic champion two places and 6,800 miles shy of Rio de Janeiro, Kim Conley veered off the track with four laps remaining in the 10,000-meter final.

Saturday was a rough day for two of the Pacific Association's leading lights at the U.S. Olympic Track & Field Trials at Hayward Field.

Stephanie Brown Trafton - Discus



AP/ Matt Slocum; Newsday.com

"You can't make every Olympic team, I guess," Brown Trafton said. "Or at least I can't."

Brown Trafton placed fifth in Saturday's discus final with a best throw of 195 feet, 8 inches. Whitney Ashley, a former NCAA champion at San Diego State, won with a

throw of 204-2. Shelbi Vaughan (197-9) and Kelsey Card (197-3) completed the U.S. trio for next month's Olympic Games in Brazil.

Having survived the all-or-nothing cauldron of the Trials in 2004, 1008 and 2012, the 36-year-old Brown Trafton couldn't quite summon the throw needed to become the first U.S. woman to qualify for four Olympic teams in the discus.

See "More from Stephanie" below...

Kim Conley – 10,000m



Chris Pietsch/The Register Guard photo

Conley, a 30-year-old resident of West Sacramento, suffered the distance runner's nightmare - a "flat tire" caused by another competitor clipping an opponent's heel. Running comfortably with the lead pack on the 10th lap, Conley was forced to sit down on the track and put her right shoe back on.

By the time she resumed running, the leaders were at least 50 meters in front.

Conley moved up to seventh place with eight laps left, but the leaders were increasing the pace. Conley opted to retire early to save herself for Thursday's qualifying heats of the 5,000 meters.

"I thought I had plenty of time to catch up, but the gap started to increase," Conley said. "Knowing that I still have the 5,000, I thought the right call was to drop out."

Molly Huddle, the U.S. record holder in the 5,000, won Saturday's 10,000 in 31 minutes, 41.62 seconds. Emily Infield (31:46.09) and Marielle Hall (31:54.77) claimed the other two Olympic spots.

San Luis Obispo native Jordan Hasay was ninth in 32:43.43. Davis natives Kaitlin Gregg Goodman (22:55.21) and Chelsea Sodaro (34:22.31) were 11th and 19th, and Santa Rosa native Alia Gray did not finish.

Conley, a 2012 Olympian in the 5,000, gravitated to the 10,000 after winning the 2014 U.S. title in Sacramento. She had geared her 2016 training toward the 25-lap race.

"Hopefully I've got the speed I'll need for the 5,000," Conley said. "I'm going to try to look at this as a good workout."

More from Stephanie

Brown Trafton, 36 and the mother of a two-year-old daughter, talked of no more workouts after failing to the match the distance she reached (199 feet, 5 inches) in Friday's discus qualifying round.

"The percentage of me throwing again is low," Brown Trafton said. "Some people throw for fun, but that's not me. It's a sacrifice. It's work. "

Ashley is the oldest of three Olympians at 27. Vaughan is 21, and Card is 23. Together they have won four of the last five NCAA titles. Card and Vaughan spoke excitedly of a changing of the guard, though Vaughan grew emotional when informed that Brown Trafton plans to retire.

The 6-foot-4 Brown Trafton is a towering figure in discus circles, both for her accomplishments and her willingness to help younger throwers. Her win at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 was the first by an American female discus thrower since 1932.

"When I qualified for the Trials (as a 17-year-old) in 2012, Stephanie took me under her wing," Vaughan said. "She texted me when I broke the national high school record to offer her congratulations. She's definitely somebody that I look up to."

Brown Trafton opened Saturday's final with a throw of 192-8 and improved in the fourth and sixth rounds. But it wasn't enough to put her on her fourth Olympic team. She said her technique never felt tight in the final.

"That discus has a mind of its own," Ashley said. "If you don't throw it just right, you're in trouble."

While Ashley, Vaughan and Card celebrated, Brown Trafton jogged across the field to kiss her daughter, Juliana, and her husband, Jerry.

"It takes a village, and I've got a great support team," she said.

Brown Trafton's eyes welled with tears when she spoke of how much she wanted the opportunity to take one last victory lap in front of the Eugene faithful.

"It just didn't come together," Brown Trafton said. "But if I have to go out somewhere, this is a good place to do it. I've had so many great experiences here. You can't come to a better place to throw the discus."

She left the retirement door slightly open.

"Maybe I'll wait until 40 and throw in some masters meets," she said. "Right now, I just want a good back rub."