



S A C R ★ M E N T O

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Field events are loaded at USATF Outdoor Championships

Athletes in the field events seldom receive the love or attention of their track counterparts. For most spectators, it's easier to follow a foot race than it is to watch six rounds of the discus or long jump.

The pole vault and high jump can be exceptions, since the men and women in those events either clear the bar or they don't.

But fans attending next week's USATF Outdoor Championships at Hornet Stadium are advised to pay attention to the field events, which feature no fewer than eight Olympic champions in the jumps and throws.

Three of the field events – the men's triple jump, women's long jump and men's shot put – offer rematches between the 2016 Olympic gold and silver medalists and the possibility of record-setting results:

Men's triple jump

Final: Friday, June 23, 6 p.m.

Christian Taylor is the two-time Olympic champion and second-longest performer in the history of the triple jump at 59 feet, 9 inches. He turns 27 five days before the final, so Taylor still has time to reach his one unfulfilled goal – eclipsing the world record of 60-0¼, set way back in 1995 by Jonathan Edwards of Great Britain.

If the recent Prefontaine Classic is a harbinger of what will unfold in Sacramento, the world record could be in jeopardy. Taylor needed nearly every inch of his 59-5 jump to edge the wind-aided 59-2¾ of **Will Claye**. The longtime rivals head to Sacramento at the top of their games.

Taylor and Claye finished 1-2 in the last two Olympic finals, but when the ex-Florida teammates squared off three years ago in the USATF Championships at Hornet Stadium, Claye jumped a personal-best 58-3 to leave Taylor more than a foot behind.

While practically all of the athletes competing in the USATF Championships need a top-three finish in Sacramento to gain a spot on the U.S. team for the 2017 IAAF World Championships in London, Taylor has an automatic “wild-card” berth as the defending world champion. To claim his free pass, he’s required to make an appearance in Sacramento. Anyone who has followed Taylor’s career knows he’ll do more than just show up. He’ll try to blast a huge jump early and see if Claye can match it.

Women's long jump

Final: Saturday, June 24, 12:45 p.m.

This event features not one but two Olympic gold medalists. **Brittney Reese** won the Olympic long jump in 2012, **Tianna Bartoletta** in 2016. Reese's 23-11 $\frac{3}{4}$ at last year's Olympic Trials was the longest jump in the world in 12 years. At the 2016 Olympics, Reese jumped 23-5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in Brazil but was edged out of the gold by Bartoletta's career-best 23-6 $\frac{1}{4}$.

In addition to her two Olympic medals, Reese has won three world outdoor and three world indoor titles. No less an authority than Jackie Joyner-Kersey believes the Mississippi native has the ability to exceed the current world mark of 24-8 $\frac{1}{4}$, set by Galina Chistyakova of Russia in 1988. Joyner-Kersey holds the U.S. mark of 24-7.

Bartoletta has had an interesting career. Back when she went by her maiden name of Tianna Madison, she won the world long jump in 2005 as a 19-year-old. After several quiet years, she re-emerged as a world-class sprinter. Bartoletta finished fourth in the 100 meters at the 2012 Olympics and ran a leg on the 4 x 100 relay that shattered the world record in claiming the gold medal. She subsequently won the 2015 world outdoor title in the long jump and claimed two more Olympic titles in 2016 (long jump and relay).

At the Prefontaine Classic in late May, Reese jumped 23-0 to defeat Bartoletta's 22-5 best. At the very least, their duel in Sacramento should erase the Hornet Stadium record of 23-4, set by Marion Jones in 2000.

At the very most?

"My focus now is on trying to break records," Reese told *Track & Field News* this spring. "I feel like I've done everything else in the sport."

The women's long jump is part of what local organizers are labeling "Sell Out Saturday." The goal is pack the stands prior to USA Track & Field's Sunday meeting to determine the site of the 2020 U.S. Olympic Trials. Sacramento is one of three finalists along with Eugene, Ore., and Walnut, Calif.

Men's shot put

Final: Sunday, June 25, 11:55 a.m.

It turned out that all **Ryan Crouser** needed to realize his enormous potential was the freedom to train full-time. After completing an accelerated master's degree program in finance last May at the University of Texas, the 6-foot-7, 300-pound Crouser beat the reigning world champion, **Joe Kovacs**, to sweep the U.S. Olympic Trials (72-6½) and Olympic (73-10¾) titles

Sacramento fans will remember Kovacs for his showing in the “Capitol Shot,” when local organizers showcased the event at the 2014 USATF Championships by holding it downtown in front of the state Capitol. Kovacs topped 22 meters (72-2¼) for the first time in Sacramento, and he improved to 74-0¼ in 2015. But Crouser succeed him as the world’s best putter in 2016.

Both men are in excellent form in 2017. Crouser fired the first post-Olympic shot with a series of 72-footers in New Zealand. Kovacs returned fire with a 74-0¾ bomb a month ago. Two weeks ago, in their first head-to-head matchup of the season, Crouser left Kovacs more than two feet behind with a throw of 73-7¼.

Crouser’s goal this season is to throw 23 meters, or 75-5½. That would be leave him less than six inches shy of the world record.

He comes from an incredible family tree of throwers. Crouser’s father, Mitch, was a nationally ranked discus thrower who narrowly missed making the 1984 Olympic team. Ryan’s uncle, Dean, was an NCAA champion in the shot put and discus while at Oregon. Another uncle, Brian, made two Olympic teams in the javelin. Ryan’s cousin Sam threw the javelin in the 2016 Olympics.

Kovacs can’t claim that sort of lineage – no thrower can – but shot putting was a mother-and-son affair in his teenaged years, when he was coached by his mother, Joanna.

The other Olympic gold medalists who will be competing on the field at Horner Stadium are Jeff Henderson (men's long jump), Stephanie Brown Trafton (women's discus), Michelle Carter (women's shot put) and Jenn Suhr (women's pole vault).

The USATF Outdoor Championships begin Thursday, June 22, and continue through Sunday, June 25. Tickets are available at www.sacsports.com. For a full schedule of the biggest meet in the world since the Rio Olympics, see <http://www.usatf.org/Events---Calendar/2017/USATF-Outdoor-Championships/Schedule.aspx>.

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