

## 2017 Tracktown Summer Series Successfully Kicks Off at Stanford

By Mark Winitz

Most professional sports in the U.S. have a geographic presence that draws local fans to come out and cheer on their hometown teams. In America, professional sports teams travel between cities, competing against their rivals on seasonal tours that brings the spirit of healthy competition close to home for both spectators and athletes. Track and field in the U.S. has never had that luxury, at least on the pro level. Now it has.

Welcome the [TrackTown Summer Series](#) presented by Beynon, now in its second year. The series, which showcases four geographically oriented teams (Portland, San Francisco, New York City and Philadelphia) is organized by TrackTown USA, a non-profit organization based in Oregon. The series is the brainchild of longtime track and field devotee, Vin Lananna, who serves as the organization's President while holding down duties as USA Track and Field's President and the University of Oregon's Associate Athletic Director.

TrackTown USA isn't new to organizing quality track and field events. It put together the 2014 IAAF World Junior Track & Field Championships, the 2015 USA Track & Field Outdoor Championships, the 2016 IAAF World Indoor Championships in Portland, the 2016 U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials, and is organizing the the 2021 IAAF World Track and Field Championships.

After a successful debut in 2016, the Tracktown Summer Series expanded to three events this year:

June 29 — San Francisco at Stanford University's Cobb Track & Angell Field

July 2 — Portland at Mt. Hood Community College

July 6 — New York City at Icahn Stadium in Randall's Island Park

The July 6 event in New York City serves as the championship meet for the series and will be televised live on ESPN.

The athletes for each of the four Tracktown Summer Series teams were selected in a five-round draft on May 19 and are competing for prize money and additional benefits in excess of a half-million dollars. The Summer Series is designed to provide top American track and field athletes with fun and innovative competitive opportunities on U.S. soil, with the ultimate goal of making those athletes household names by the time the 2021 IAAF World Championships arrive.

"It's vital that we attract the casual kind of sports fan to have an interest in our sport," Lananna said in a pre-meet press gathering. "I think this is a way to do it, to have fans connect to their local area teams and follow the fine athletes that compete for them. We have a fantastic organization here (for the San Francisco/Stanford University stop of the series) chaired by Nancy Ditz and Dena Evans, and they've done a marvelous job as volunteers. It's like bringing the old gang together again."

Evans competed collegiately for Stanford University, where Lananna served as Director of Track and Field from 1992 to 2003. Ditz competed in the 1988 Olympic Games Marathon in Seoul, South Korea after graduating from Stanford in 1976.

A definite benefit of the Tracktown Summer Series is giving America's top track and field pro athletes more opportunities to compete on U.S. soil during the summer track season without having to haul over to Europe and beyond for IAAF Diamond League events, thus keeping them more vitalized for important events such as this year's IAAF World Track and Field Championships in London.

"Every season after the U.S. Track and Field Championships we all had to jump on a plane and go to Europe (for top competition)," said Nick Symmonds, a six-time U.S. national 800 meter champion and two-time Olympian who serves as the General Manager for Team San Francisco in the TrackTown Summer Series. "I said what I want to do is reach the American fans. Now, here's Tracktown, building three events in San Francisco, Portland, and New York where fans can come out and watch their favorite athletes."

At the Stanford stop for the series an enthusiastic crowd of onlookers included many younger fans who were present for the special Boys' Mile and Kids' Half Lapper. The excitement on the track included a narrow win by 2016 U.S. Olympic silver medalist at 5000 meters, Paul Chelimo (Team San Francisco). Chelimo ran 7:48.58, narrowly defeating Graham Crawford (7:49.63, Team New York) and Lopez Lomong (7:51.20, Team Portland).

"A big part for doing the Tracktown Summer Series is because I really want to promote track and field in the United States," said Chelimo. "This year I turned down an invitation from the Diamond League meet in Paris for their 3K there so I could compete here. Now, we don't need to go to Europe to compete, but soon athletes over there will want to come here. Right now, the fields in the Summer Series are modestly deep, but it's still a new concept and it takes time for athletes to embrace it."

The Boys 1-Mile race had some exceptional action as recent St. Joseph Notre Dame High School (Alameda, CA) graduate Cooper Teare topped the field in an excellent 4:01.92, narrowly missing a coveted sub-4 mark. Luis Grijalva, a 2017 graduate of Armijo High School (Fairfield, CA), placed a close second to Teare in 4:02.64.

"It's awesome, especially getting a crowd like this on the track. It just pumps everyone up," said Teare who is headed to the University of Oregon this coming school year. "I wanted a sub-4:00 so badly. Having a title of fastest (high schooler) to-not-break-4 is...well, it was so close. I've run 4:02 or under four times so I'm right on the cusp, but I'll definitely have something to accomplish next year at Oregon. It's definitely a dream school, and having an opportunity to run there is awesome."

Watch for Teare on his next stop, which will be at the Pan American Junior Athletics Championships in Peru, July 21-23.

In the women's 1,500-meter race at the Stanford/San Francisco Tracktown Summer Series stop, PA/USATF's Tori Tsois (San Jose, CA), competing for the Summer Series New York team, finished sixth in 4:10. San Francisco team's Hannah Fields (Seattle, WA) pinned down the victory in 4:05.30.

"They told the pace setter to go out at 64 or 65 (second laps) and that's kind of quick for me now," said Tsois. "But I tried to hold on as long as I could and tied my PR. It's fun being here on the track that I practice on."

In non-Tracktown Summer Series events Tsois competes for PA/USATFS Strava Track Club under the direction of coach Dena Evans.

For the last three events of the day, fans at Stanford were invited down to trackside from the stands to take in the action up close as the San Francisco Tracktown Summer Series squad took home the team title in front of Portland, New York City, and Philadelphia.