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BRUIN TRACK: POTENTIALLY ONE OF THE BEST

"Potentially this is one of the better teams I've had," says George Fox College track coach Rich Allen of this year's squad.

If that sounds familiar it's because it's the same thing Allen said a year ago. And the Bruins last spring finished second in NAIA District 2 competition, just $4 \frac{2}{3}$ points out of first.

It's also the same optimism that earned Allen designation as the district's Coach of the Year in all sports and led the Bruins to a 16th place national finish in the NAIA championships.

Allen has had a good recruiting year and he says "I feel most of the events are covered well; we have the gambit of events covered better."

"If everybody does his job, this could be one of the better teams in the district," he says, not ready yet to claim the district title.

There are some questions, but the Bruins are thinking district title again. One of the questions is depth. "We're not real deep in some events," Allen admits.

That creates some worries about injuries, such as in the pole vault with only one competitor. If some of the first-line athletes are out, "injuries will bother," Allen says.

Half of the 26-man squad is new to the Bruin team, including eight freshmen. "Part of how well we do will depend on our young athletes--how quickly they can move in and carry the load," Allen says. "But I think they will be capable right from the start and they're working to that and showing that."

Allen, from his start with the Bruins in the 1970 season, has built the George Fox track program to one consistently among the best in Northwest small colleges. In his career he has produced 16 national competitors on the NAIA level. Six have won national All-American designation. Two of his trackmen have been named District 2 Athlete of the Year.

Allen doesn't expect any less this year. "I expect we'll do well," he says. "I fully expect we'll have several people in the nationals again."

That will be decided in the district championships May 11-12 in Portland and in a schedule of 14 meets preceding.

Allen has some tested athletes returning, including All-American Steve Blikstad, third in the nation last spring in the steeplechase and one of the district's top distance runners. He holds 10 George Fox marks.

Also back as a senior is Gregg Griffin, first in both the 100 and 200 distances last spring. And senior Dave Molstad, district champion in the 10,000-meters is back. So is the district record setting mile relay squad.

The discus and hammer events have been beefed up and the jumpers are better.

Hardest to replace is Chad Neeley, an All-American last spring when he finished second nationally in the 400-intermediate hurdles, and a top decathlete. Long jumper Amadu Koroma, with a 23-2 3/4 school record, also has graduated.

But there are sharp newcomers in several events, including some with marks near or better than existing school records, and that gives Allen his optimism.