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## NCE/UH Looks To Build Team Through Disciplines And Talents



The Titans track team members are, left to right, front row-Shelby Hegreberg, Lainie Bekkerus, Ashlan Longtine, Aurora Brunner, Evelyn Pazdernik, Jazzalyn Keezer; middle row-Mina Kjono, Emelia Tweten, Keevin Losh, Skylar Dunham, Izzy Jacobson, Natalie Halvorson; back row-Coach Ryan Paul, Cole Brenna, Tess Anderson, Austyn Wibbels, Nicolas Wilck, Atlanta Voelker, Hoyt Jensen, and Coach Hunter Schow.

**By Kelsey Buchholz**

The Norman County East/Ulen-Hitterdal Titans boys track and field team enters the 2026 season looking to develop a young roster under veteran head coach Ryan Pahl, now in his ninth season.

Pahl is joined by assistant coach Hunter Schow, who is in her sixth year with the program. The knowledge, consistency, and experience these coaches bring to the Titan track and field athletes will help build the foundation of success and improvement for experienced athletes and newcomers not just this season but heading into the following years.

Leading the Titans is junior captain Hoyt Jensen, who competes in sprints and throws. Jensen is expected to play a key role both in competition and as a mentor to younger athletes.

“Hoyt has been with the program and knows the standard,” Coach Pahl said. “He works independently and also helps with the younger student-athletes.” This internal drive has been critical in Jensen working toward new PRs as well as setting the standard for younger athletes.

Other key contributors coming back to the Titans this season include sophomores Keevin Losh and

Austyn Wibbels and eighth grader eighth-grader Skylar Dunham, all competing in sprints and long jump, along with a group of younger athletes who will be counted on to gain experience quickly.

The team’s strength is in the sprints and the field events, particularly the throwing group, which has consistently performed well in recent seasons. The experience for the sprinters and the prior successes of the throwers bode well for a solid start for NCE/UH as the rest of the athletes develop and get used to competition performance within their disciplines.

In the conference, Park Christian is once again

viewed as the team to beat due to its depth and strength across events. But competing against those strong athletes, helps set the standard for increasing goals throughout the season.

Despite some youthfulness and experience in the roster as a whole, Coach Pahl is optimistic about the group’s potential. “I think this group of newcomers paired with our experienced student-athletes are going to turn some heads at many of our meets,” he said.

**Go Titan Track!**

## Titans Girls Track Focus On Progress This Season

**By Kelsey Buchholz**

With a focus on growth and development, the Titan girls track and field team spring into the 2026 season with energy and enthusiasm.

The team is led by ninth-year head coach Ryan Pahl and assisted by Hunter Schow, in her sixth year with the team. Their veteran coaching and leadership will be key as the majority of the Titans’ tracksters are young athletes, eager to improve in and possibly discover other disciplines.

Among those back for Norman County East/Ulen-Hitterdal are ninth-graders Mina Kjono (mid-distance, throws) and Emelia Tweten (mid-distance). Another returner with experience is eighth grader Evelyn Pazdernik (sprints). The youthfulness paired with the experience will be crucial in building the Titan girls track program. Additionally there are many new athletes and ones still early in their track careers, so development will be a major focus throughout the spring.

Coach Pahl’s focus continues to be on improvement and long-term growth for the individuals and the team as a whole. With so many underclassmen, including multiple newcomers, there is a lot of opportunity to explore disciplines and talent but also make great strides in performance by the end of the season. “We have a lot of new faces to the program, so I expect a lot of growth from our team,” he said.

One of the early positives has been the team’s work ethic, with athletes showing a willingness to put in the effort needed to improve, especially since there is so much flexibility in disciplines and development.

As with the boys’ team, depth will be a challenge for the Titans, and Park Christian is considered the conference favorite due to its numbers and event-by-event strength. Regardless of the tough competition



the Titans’ primary goal this season is simple: improvement at each meet. With many athletes new to the sport, Coach Pahl expects steady growth as the season progresses.

Even so, Coach Pahl believes the combination of newcomers and returning athletes could lead to some surprises as the season gets underway. With a focus on steady progress and building experience, the Titans hope to make strides throughout the spring and continue laying the foundation for the future of the program.

**Good Luck Athletes On Your Spring Sports Season!**

**Thank you to all the parents, coaches, fans and businesses for supporting your local sports teams.**