

Seasoned Athletes Will Be The Key For UCB Badgers

By Kelli Froslie

Every year, coaches look for a certain "something" to latch onto to guide them through the season. This year, UCB Badgers Boys Track and Field Head Coach Aaron Haugen is looking to the more seasoned athletes.

"We've been successful getting 'older' over the last few years. That has really helped us build depth on the team, where the kids are really competing with each other rather than just going to meets. That has built a really positive competitive environment," said Haugen. There were a couple of seniors who joined the Badgers who either hadn't competed before or had taken the last year off. "In any sport, being old on the boys' side of competition is an advantage, so we're fortunate to have them."

Practices for the 2026 season are off to a great start. According to Haugen, the kids have positive attitudes and, just like all spring sports, are looking forward to getting outside more.

The weather in the spring is always a challenge. Another challenge the Badgers face is staying healthy at the end of the year. "We've got a couple of little nagging injuries right now that need to be managed. But we'd rather have kids who are 100% healthy than try to push them through things and not have them healthy at the end of the season."

Returning conference and state athletes include Leif Shervey, placing second in the 100m Dash and sixth in the 200m dash at the state meet; and Evan Schenck,



The Badgers boys track team members are, left to right, front row-Evan Swan, Bryson Landsem, Grant Slominski, Colton Klages, Avery Jones, Michael Rislund, Brooks Graunke; row two-Rafael Sanchez Velez, Evan Schenck, Noah Saari, Braeden Lessard, Landon Nathe, Landon Noonan, Benjamin Graunke, Wyatt Henman; row three-Bennett Johnson, Urijah Cooley, Jaxon Schenck, Sam Olson, Jack Bisek, Brody Hanson, Hunter Harman, Coleman Hoff, Lane Lelm, Drew Knecht; back row-Jackson Kastel, Leif Shervey, Matthew Shervey, Riley Edwards, Tucker Anderson, Collin Bauman, Sam Aakre, Devin Asleson, and Jayden Alvarado.

15th in the 400m dash, sixth in the 4x200m Relay, and 22nd in the 4x400m Relay at the state level. The Badgers finished third overall at the section meet.

Standout members for the Badgers are Leif Shervey and Evan Schenck in sprints, Jaxon Schenck, Mason Boeshans, and Eddie Olson jumping; in throwing are Riley Edwards and Tucker Anderson; and Sam Olson and Urijah Cooley in hurdles.

It's not just the veteran tracksters Haugen is looking for success. He is looking to his entire team. "We should have good depth throughout

all events with each athlete getting pushed in order to compete at meets," said Haugen.

Haugen is excited to see what this season brings. "I expect us to be competitive in all four relays as well as some individuals by the end of the season. I'm excited to see what some of our field event athletes can accomplish throughout the season, too."

On the track, coaches are trying to get as many kids down to the state meet as possible. Off the track, they are trying to establish some habits the athletes can take with them when they're done competing.

Haugen is impressed with the overall attitude of their key returners. The advantage they have is that they know what it takes to make it to a state meet and to compete well down there. It's not easy to perform well on such a big stage, but the kids have really performed well the last couple of years. "Hopefully, the boys and girls who were down there the last year or two will have a big impact on less experienced athletes so they can learn how to prepare themselves to compete to the best of their ability."

The coaching staff is looking towards those athletes to help guide the younger athletes. "The young

athletes are eager to learn and have worked hard these first few weeks. They're extremely coachable and are making big strides. We should see big gains from them these first few meets as they get comfortable with workouts and competing at the varsity level."

"We're looking forward to seeing what we can build on from last year, where we had every relay compete at the Section meet. We definitely lost some great seniors from last season, but have a strong nucleus that should help us compete with everyone at the end of May," commented Haugen. Coaches, besides Haugen for the

Badgers, include Zion Smith with throws, Abby Syverson overseeing sprints, and Dylan Olson leading the distance runners. Haugen is in his fifth year as head coach, his second for the Badgers. The UCB Badgers are comprised of athletes from Hawley and Lake Park-Audubon.

Members of the 2026 UCB Badgers are:

Seniors: Jack Bisek-jumps, Douglas Poitra-throws, Hunter Harman-distance, Coleman Hoff-distance, Avery Jones-sprints/jumps, Jackson Kastel-sprints, Braeden Lessard-distance, Landon Noonan-distance, Rafael Sanchez Velez-distance, Evan Schenck-sprints, Jaxon Schenck-jumps; Leif Shervey-sprints.

Juniors: Jayden Alvarado-sprints, Tucker Anderson-throws, Colling Bauman-sprints/jumps, Mason Boeshan-sprints/jumps, Urijah Cooley-hurdles/sprints, Wyatt Denman-pole vault, Benjamin Graunke-distance, Caleb Halvorson-jumps, Brody Hanson-hurdles/jumps, Colton Klages-sprints, Lane Lelm-sprints, Landon Nathe-distance/pole vault, Grant Slominski-sprints.

Sophomores: Sam Aakre-sprints/throws, Devin Asleson-sprints, Drew Knecht-distance, Eddie Olson-jumps/sprints, Michael Rislund-throws, Noah Saari-jumps/sprints, Samuel Strom-distance.

Freshmen: Riley Edwards-throws, Brooks Graunke-distance, Bennett Johnson-distance, Bryson Landsem-distance, Sam Olson-hurdles/sprints, Matthew Shervey-sprints, Evan Swan-distance.

Adaptability Is Key To Success For UCB Girls Badger Track

By Kelli Froslie

Building a good foundation is key to any sport. But this year, the UCB Badger Girls Track and Field team will face a challenge: their home track is being renovated starting in May.

"Losing access to our home facility will require us to adapt and be flexible with our training, finding new ways to maintain the same level of preparation and intensity despite the circumstances," commented Badger Head Coach Dylan Olson. "While these challenges may present difficulties, our focus must remain on what we can control. We, as the coaching staff, need to emphasize effort, attitude, and adaptability."

However, practices are going well overall. The weather has made it tough to stay consistently outside, but the athletes have been flexible and are making it work. "We have strong numbers and a great group of athletes."

"We graduated a few key athletes, but many of our returners have gained valuable experience over the years, and we're excited to build on that," Olson commented.

The Badgers' expectations for the season are very clear: qualify as many athletes as possible for the state meet. This experience gives athletes the chance to compete at the highest level and also creates a meaningful, lifelong experience.

"Our goals extend beyond just state qualifications. We are committed to helping every athlete grow and improve in their respective events, whether that means refining their technique, increasing their endurance, or developing a stronger competitive mindset," said Olson.

The coaches strive to instill confidence and resilience in their athletes - qualities that will benefit them not only in their sport but also in life beyond competition.



The Badgers girls track team members are, left to right, front row-Chelsea Petersen, Kate DeBlicek, Dezirae Aldinger, Arianna Jacobson, Alexis Newman, Amelia Geslin; row two-Mikayla Jelinek, Gracey Hecker, Audrey Ellingson, Taiya Ulschmid, Alexis Ackerland, Kylee Geray, Kendra Nelson; row three-Brylie Nelson, Alexis Pahl, Katie Vetter, Ariya Windahl, Stella Sannes, Rachel Swan, Ali Langerud, Lily King; back row-Evelyn Block, Aurora Reed, Chloe Johnson, Josephine Theis, Bentlee Swenson, Reagan Wenzel, Lydia Torgerson, and Hannah Bigger.

"Through hard work, dedication, and perseverance, we hope each athlete leaves the season feeling accomplished, prepared for future challenges, and proud of the progress they've made."

Olson is looking towards two main athletes to help lead the season. Katie Vetter and Chloe Johnson are expected to help lead the younger athletes.

Younger athletes look to more experienced athletes for guidance and advice, leaning on their knowledge and example to help them improve and grow.

However, Olson knows it's not just up to two athletes. "Our veteran runners bring outstanding leadership skills that will be instrumental in guiding and developing our newcomers throughout the season.

They set a strong example by showing up to practice each day with focus, dedication, and a relentless work ethic. Their commitment to improvement and their willingness to push themselves help set the tone for the entire team."

"One challenge we sometimes face is their eagerness to work hard every single day, even on days specifically designed for recovery. While their determination is admirable, learning to balance effort with proper rest and recovery is crucial for long-term success and injury prevention. Helping them understand the importance of these lighter days will be key to keeping everyone healthy and performing at their best throughout the season," said Olson.

"With all of our state participants

returning, we're heading into this season with a strong foundation and plenty of momentum. In addition to our experienced athletes, we have some younger competitors with the potential to make a significant impact. As a coaching staff, we believe we can make improvements in many areas from last year, and we're excited to see how this team grows and competes."

Coaches for the 2026 UCB Lady Badgers include Abby Syverson on sprints; Zion Smith will oversee throwing; Joe Conrad will focus on pole vault; Aaron Haugen will be on jumps, while Olson will focus on the distance runners.

Members of the Badgers are:

Seniors: Kate DeBlicek, Kylee Geray, Gracey Hecker, Kendra Nelson, Alexis Newman, Rylee

Rood, and Lydia Torgerson.

Juniors: Dezirae Aldinger, Audrey Ellingson, Mikayla Jelinek, Chloe Johnson, Ali Langerud, Josie Larson, Lykin Martodam, Shawna Monroe, Rachel Swan, Katie Vetter, Jana Weinert, and Ariya Windahl.

Sophomores: Evelyn Block, Amelia Geslin, Kaileigh Grandstrand, Alexis Pahl, Chelsea Petersen, Stella Sannes, and Aurora Windahl.

Fremen: Alexis Ackerland, Hannah Bigger, Kinzey Ellingson, Arianna Jacobson, Lilly King, Brylie Nelson, Violet Schiffer, Josephine Theis, and Taiya Ulschmid.

Eighth graders: Bentlee Swenson and Reagan Wenzel.

"It's shaping up to be a promising season, and we can't wait to see where the year takes us!" concluded Olson.



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