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(Neb.)-Bomb threat ends track meet for Chadron State in California



By: Andrew Lacy Posted at: 04/18/2013 10:31 PM

The track and field meet that the Chadron State College teams had entered Thursday was cancelled when a bomb threat forced evacuation of the California State-Los Angeles campus.

Chadron State coach Ryan Baily said the women's hammer throw had been completed, the first flight in the men's hammer throw was underway and the women had finished warming up for the pole vault when the bomb threat was received shortly after noon.

"We had to pack up and leave," Baily said. "They put up barricades and helicopters were flying overhead. We had to walk about two miles, carrying our poles and everything, and cross freeways to meet the bus in an open lot after we'd called the driver to come get us. It was pretty crazy."

No bomb was found, but the meet was called off. The approximately 20,000 students at the university also were evacuated, adding to the congestion.

About 45 Chadron State athletes and the coaching staff left Chadron on Sunday so they could compete in what were expected to be perfect conditions. The decision was made to go to southern California about two weeks ago after long-range forecasts called for wintry conditions in much of the Midwest in mid-April. Four competitions were lined up during the trip.

The Eagles have competed just once outdoors this spring and the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference Meet is May 5-7. The team cannot compete during finals week, which is April 29 through May 3.

Baily said the weather and the facilities in California are great and there's plenty of competition with several hundred athletes from as far away as New York entered. However, the bomb threat was an unexpected setback.

Officials were undoubtedly cautious after what happened on Monday at the Boston Marathon.

The good news is there are other meets scheduled for Friday and Saturday, and three Eagles who entered multi-events at another location were able to complete that competition late Thursday.

Friday's meet, the Bryan Clay Invitational, is hosted by Azusa Pacific University and Saturday's meet is at Long Beach University Invitational.

"We've been calling to make sure all of our athletes are entered in at least one of those meets," Baily explained.

Baily said the last he had heard there were about 1,400 entries for Friday's meet and nearly 2,000 for Saturday's.

Two Eagles, senior Chelsea Murray and sophomore Hunter Dittbenner, had personal bests in the multi-events. Murray scored 4,336 points in the heptathlon and Dittbenner scored 5,715 points in the decathlon.

Murray finished 20th among the 24 entries in the heptathlon. All of those who finished ahead of her were from Division I schools. Chari Hawkins of Utah State was the winner with 5,441 points and Anne Martin of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was second with 5,321.

Dittebenner was 10th among the 14 men in the Class B decathlon. The winner was Michael McPherson of Utah Valley with 6,973 points. Ryan Jenson of the University of North Dakota was the runner-up with 6,713.

CSC's Sean Munger also was in the decathlon. He finished with 5,397 points.

Baily said the Eagles' Alyssa Norton threw the hammer about 144 feet, but it is not known where she placed. In the men's competition, A.J. Huffman hit about 138 feet, a personal best, at the Cal State-Los Angeles Meet before the meet was abruptly halted.

"We're just praying that nothing crazy like this happens again," Baily said.