

2011 Liberty Track & Field Quick Facts

General Information

Name of School..... Liberty University
 City/Zip Lynchburg, Va. 24502
 Founded 1971
 Enrollment 11,928
 Nickname..... Flames
 School Colors Red, White & Blue
 Indoor Track Tolsma Indoor Track Center
 Outdoor Track..... Matthes-Hopkins Track
 Affiliation..... NCAA Division I
 Conference Big South
 Founder Dr. Jerry Falwell
 Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr.
 Vice Chancellor Dr. Ronald Godwin
 Director of Athletics..... Jeff Barber
 Athletics Dept. Phone..... (434) 582-2100

Track & Field Information

Head Coach..... Brant Tolsma
 Alma Mater Newark College of Engineering, '71
 Years at Liberty..... 25
 Associate Head Coach
 Lance Bingham (Texas Tech, '85)
 Assistant Coaches
 Andrew McFadden (Liberty, '98)
 Clendon Henderson (Liberty, '08)
 Derek Scott (Cornerstone, '07)
 Daniel Newell (Liberty, '08)
 Certified Athletic Trainer
 Laura Hoskins

Track & Field History

First Season of Track & Field 1976
 Women's Big South Championships/Last
 21/2011
 Men's Big South Championships/Last
 30/2011
 Men's IC4A Championships/Last
 3/2008
 Women's Track Division I All-Americans
 2 (5 total All-America honors)
 Men's Track Division I All-Americans
 12 (31 total All-America honors)

Athletics Communications Info.

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Liberty FLAMES

at

2011 NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships

June 8-11, 2011

Des Moines, Iowa - Drake Stadium

The Meet

Three members of the Big South Conference champion Liberty men's track & field team have qualified to compete in the 2011 NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships. Sam Chelanga (men's 5K and 10K), Elliot Galeone (men's javelin) and Kolby Shepherd (men's pole vault) will take part in the meet at Drake Stadium in Des Moines, Iowa, June 8-11.

How They Got Here

Sam Chelanga posted the fastest men's 5K (14:06.16) and 10K (29:00.94) times at the NCAA Division I East Preliminary Round meet. Elliot Galeone was seventh in the men's javelin at 227-8, while Kolby Shepherd was one of 11 pole vaulters to clear 17-0.75.

Looking Back at Last Year

Four Liberty Flames competed in the 2010 NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships, held at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore. Sam Chelanga was the star of the show, rolling to the 10K national title and finishing a close second in the 5K final. Liberty was also represented by Elliot Galeone (men's javelin), Evans Kigen (men's steeplechase) and Clarence Powell (men's triple jump).

Chelanga's performance tallied 18 team points for the Flames, tying them with Kentucky for 13th place in the final team standings. It was the highest finish ever by a Big South Conference men's or women's track & field team at the NCAA Division I Track & Field Championships, indoors or outdoors.

Liberty Competition Schedule (All times listed are Eastern and subject to change)

June 8

4:05 p.m. - Men's Javelin (Elliot Galeone)
 6:35 p.m. - Men's Pole Vault (Kolby Shepherd)

June 9

9:50 p.m. - Men's 10,000 Final (Sam Chelanga)

June 11

2:21 p.m. - Men's 5,000 Final (Sam Chelanga)

Liberty's NCAA Qualifiers

Name (Event(s))	Ht.	Yr.	Hometown
Sam Chelanga (5K & 10K)	5-7	R-Sr.	Nairobi, Kenya
<i>Notes: shuh-LANG-guh, NCAA 10K record holder (27:08.39), 11-time All-American</i>			
Elliot Galeone (Javelin)	6-5	R-Sr.	White Hall, Md.
<i>Notes: GAL-lee-own, 2nd straight NCAA national appearance, Big South champion</i>			
Kolby Shepherd (Pole Vault)	5-8	R-Jr.	Dublin, Ga.
<i>Notes: Liberty's first men's pole vaulter at NCAA national meet, Big South champion</i>			

2011 Liberty Outdoor Track & Field Schedule/Results

- 3/11-12 Coastal Carolina Invitational
Conway, S.C.
- 3/18-19 Shamrock Invitational
Myrtle Beach, S.C.
- 3/25-26 Raleigh Relays
Raleigh, N.C.
- 4/1-2 Liberty Collegiate Invitational
Lynchburg, Va.
- 4/6-9 Texas Relays
Austin, Texas
- 4/8 Carolina's Cup
Rock Hill, S.C.
(Men-3rd, Women-4th)
- 4/21-23 Big South Championship
Lexington, Va.
(Men-1st, Women-2nd)
- 4/28-29 Drake Relays
Des Moines, Iowa
- 4/29-30 Radford Invitational
Radford, Va.
- 5/5 Liberty Twilight Qualifier
Lynchburg, Va.
- 5/13-15 ECAC/IC4A Championship
Princeton, N.J.
(Men-8th, Women-T-29th)
- 5/26-28 NCAA East Preliminary Round
Bloomington, Ind.
- 6/8-11 NCAA Outdoor T&F Champ.
Des Moines, Iowa
- 6/23-26 USATF Jr./Sr. T&F Champ.
Eugene, Ore

Outdoor School Records Set in 2011

Men's Pole Vault

17-6.5 - Kolby Shepherd (April 9)
(Tied Todd Pettyjohn's 5/23/93 record)

Men's Javelin

229-5 - Elliot Galeone (April 21)

Women's Shuttle Hurdles Relay

58.77 - Charnuski, Matthews,
Houseknecht, Mitchell (Mar. 11)

Women's Triple Jump

42-0.5 - Mia Aghaji (May 5)



Head Coach Brant Tolsma

25th Year at Liberty

Two-Time NCAA District Coach of the Year

46-Time Big South Coach of the Year

Has Coached His Teams to 86 Conference Titles

Has Coached 15 NCAA Division I All-Americans

Has Coached 3 NCAA Division I Individual National Champions

Now celebrating his 25th year at Liberty, Brant Tolsma is the head coach of the men's and women's cross country and track & field teams. He was brought to Liberty in 1986 by former Liberty track & field coach, Jake Matthes, to serve as the head men's track & field coach. By 1991, Tolsma had assumed each of the coaching positions he still holds today.

Tolsma, the longest-tenured head coach in the history of Liberty Athletics, shows no signs of slowing down. The 2009-10 athletic year was one of the finest in program history, highlighted by the Big South Conference's first-ever "Double Triple." The unique achievement, which has only been accomplished by nine different schools in NCAA Division I history, saw the Flames and Lady Flames sweep all six Big South titles (men's cross country, indoor track & field and outdoor track & field and women's cross country, indoor track & field and outdoor track & field.)

Under Tolsma's guidance, Liberty's cross country and track & field squads have now won 86 conference titles (including Big South, IC4A and Mason-Dixon) since his arrival on campus.

Additionally, Sam Chelanga has won two NCAA national titles in cross country, as well as the outdoor track & field 10K, more than doubling Liberty's number of NCAA Division I national championships. Heather (Sagan) Zealand won the mile at the 2002 NCAA Division I Indoor Track & Field Championships and Josh McDougal was the national champion at the 2007 NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships. Tolsma has been at the helm for each of the Flames' five individual national titles.

Chelanga's performance at the 2010 NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships, which also included a runner-up finish in the 5K, helped Liberty tie for 13th place in the final men's team standings. That is the highest NCAA Division I team finish in program and Big South Conference history in either cross country or track & field.

Tolsma has won 46 Big South Coach of the Year honors and twice was named the NCAA District Coach of the Year. His number of coach of the year recognitions is almost exactly equal to the number of Division I All-Americans he has coached at Liberty. Tolsma's athletes have earned a combined 45 All-America honors since the program moved to the NCAA Division I level in 1989.

Tolsma's student-athletes have also excelled in the classroom during his tenure at Liberty. Seven of the 17 Liberty student-athletes who have earned CoSIDA Academic All-America honors at the Division I level competed in either cross country, track & field or both.

When he can find time, Tolsma still actively trains and competes in track & field. He won his age group in the World Double Decathlon Championship in both 2005 and 2010, as well as the Masters National Decathlon Championship in both 1993 and 2003. He placed second at the World Veterans Games decathlon in 1995 and at the 2002 World Double Decathlon Championship in Finland.

This past fall at the Matthes-Hopkins Track Complex, Tolsma set the world record for men aged 60 and over in the double decathlon, a two-day, 20-event competition which includes all of the track & field disciplines. In October 2007, Tolsma broke his age group's world record for the one-day double decathlon, at the Matthes-Hopkins Track Complex. Tolsma also set an age group (55-60) world record for the double heptathlon in December 2008, while competing at Liberty's indoor track & field facility bearing his name.

Tolsma enjoys a number of sports and fitness activities, especially water-skiing. Nancy, his wife of 36 years, is the mother of his six children, Michelle, who is married to former Liberty tennis player Matthew Schley, Rachel, Brenda, who is married to current Liberty assistant track & field coach Clendon Henderson, Regina, Joey and Tami, a junior on the Liberty women's track & field team. Tolsma also has six grandchildren.

Liberty's NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Men's All-Americans

1989

Henry Elliott, Decathlon
7th place - 7,481 points

1993

Todd Pettyjohn, Decathlon
9th place - 7,195 points

1994

Jacob Swinton, 100 Meters
7th place - 10.32

Ryan Werner, Decathlon
9th place - 7,236 points

1995

Ryan Werner, Decathlon
4th place - 7,662 points

1996

Ryan Werner, Decathlon
8th place - 7,542 points

1999

Greg Benhase, Decathlon
11th place - 7,238 points

Ken Howell, Decathlon
14th place - 7,143 points

2000

Mike Decker, 400 Meters
9th place - 45.59

Josh Jones, Decathlon
11th place - 7,222 points

2006

Josh McDougal, 5,000 Meters
9th place - 14:24.17

2007

Josh McDougal, 10,000 Meters
3rd place - 28:58.28

Josh McDougal, 5,000 Meters
4th place - 13:41.03

Brandon Hoskins, Decathlon
7th place - 7,561 points

2008

Clendon Henderson, Discus
3rd place - 192-7 (58.70m)

2009

Sam Chelanga, 10,000 Meters
3rd place - 28:35.40

2010

Sam Chelanga, 10,000 Meters
1st place - 28:37.40

Sam Chelanga, 5,000 Meters
2nd place - 13:45.35

Triple Crown x 5

Liberty continued its dominance of Big South Conference men's cross country and track & field this year, claiming its fifth straight conference "Triple Crown." The Flames won Big South titles in men's cross country, indoor track & field and outdoor track & field in 2010-11.

Liberty has now claimed 15 consecutive Big South cross country/track & field championships, a streak which began at the 2006 Big South Cross Country Championship. During their time as a conference member, the Flames have won 42 of 52 possible Big South titles in men's cross country, indoor track & field and outdoor track & field.

Sam Chelanga, Elliot Galeone and Kolby Shepherd have all been key parts of Liberty's success at the Big South level during their careers, combining to win 16 Big South individual championships between the trio.

Another Big South Comparison

Liberty's Sam Chelanga, Elliot Galeone and Kolby Shepherd give the Flames more than half of the Big South Conference's representatives in Des Moines. The only other Big South athletes to qualify were VMI's Felix Kitur (men's 800) and UNC Asheville's Natalie Pearson (women's 200).

First-Timer

This week, redshirt junior pole vaulter Kolby Shepherd will be making his first visit to the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships.

The most recent Liberty competitor to become an All-American during her first NCAA outdoor appearance was Heather (Sagan) Zealand, the national runner-up at 1,500 meters in 2002. Josh Jones, an All-American in the decathlon at the 2000 NCAA outdoor championship meet, was the last Liberty men's athlete to do so.

Liberty's NCAA Team Finishes

Last season, the Liberty men's squad scored 18 points at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships, thanks to Sam Chelanga's 10K victory and runner-up finish in the 5K. As a result, the Flames tied Kentucky for 13th place in the final team standings. It was the highest finish ever by a Big South Conference track & field team (men's or women's, indoor or outdoor) at the NCAA national meet.

Streaks Continued

This is the seventh consecutive year that Liberty has sent at least one men's distance runner to the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships and the fifth straight year a Liberty men's thrower is competing at the meet.

History at Drake Stadium

Liberty has competed in the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships at Drake Stadium once before, in 2008. That year, current Liberty assistant coach Clendon Henderson and Evans Kigen were the Flames' top performers.

Henderson placed third in the men's discus, earning All-America honors in the final meet of his collegiate career. Meanwhile, Kigen ran a Big South-record time of 8:43.77 in the men's steeplechase final, taking 10th place in the event.

Of Liberty's three qualifiers to this year's NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships, only Galeone has previously competed at Drake. On April 29, he finished third in the javelin at the Drake Relays, thanks to a throw of 227-5.

Check Another One Off the List

Kolby Shepherd's qualification to the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships makes the pole vault the 14th different event a Liberty men's athlete has competed in at this meet.

The Flames have also boasted NCAA national qualifiers in the men's 100, 400, steeplechase, 5K, 10K, 400 hurdles, long jump, triple jump, high jump, discus, hammer, javelin and decathlon during their 23 seasons as an NCAA Division I member.

As a result, that list is now only lacking the 200, 800, 1,500, 110 hurdles, 4 x 100, 4 x 400 and shot put disciplines.



Sam Chelanga

*5-7 Redshirt Senior
Nairobi, Kenya*

Men's 10,000 Meters
F - Thursday, 9:50 p.m.

Men's 5,000 Meters
F - Saturday, 2:21 p.m.

Personal Bests

5K - 13:19.79 (indoor best)
(No. 2 in NCAA history)
2/13/09 - Fayetteville, Ark.

5K - 13:24.73 (outdoor best)
5/31/08 - New York, N. Y.

10K - 27:08.39
(NCAA Record)
5/1/10 - Stanford, Calif.

Past NCAA Outdoor Track Experience

2010
1st place in 10K (28:37.40)
All-American

2010
2nd place in 5K (13:45.35)
All-American

2009
3rd place in 10K (28:35.40)
All-American

*(Competing for Fairleigh
Dickinson)*

2007
19th place in 5K (14:17.52)
Did not qualify for final

Chelanga's 2011 Outdoor Season to Date

5,000-Meter Run

14:02.57 – Radford Invitational (4/30/11), 1st place

14:06.16 – NCAA East Preliminary Round (5/28/11), 1st place

10,000-Meter Run

28:15.64 – Raleigh Relays (3/25/11), 1st place

29:00.94 – NCAA East Preliminary Round (5/26/11), 1st place

Tough to Beat in the 10K

Sam Chelanga not only enters this week's meet as the defending NCAA national champion in the 10K, but is also attempting to continue a stretch of dominance at the 10K distance.

Chelanga placed third in the men's 10K final at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships, June 11, 2009 in Fayetteville, Ark. Since then, Chelanga has not lost to any collegiate athletes at the 10K distance in either cross country or track & field.

The impressive string, which spans nine races, includes three national championships (2009 & 2010 cross country and 2010 outdoor track 10K). It also features Chelanga's NCAA-record 27:08.39 clocking on May 1, 2010 in Stanford, Calif.

Close But No Cigar in the 5K

Sam Chelanga will attempt to claim his first NCAA national title at the 5K distance, after coming close on several previous occasions. Chelanga has posted four national runner-up finishes in the 5K during his career, including three straight at the NCAA Division I Indoor Track & Field Championships (2009, 2010 & 2011). He was also the 5K runner-up at the 2010 NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships.

Chasing History

In his final collegiate meet, Sam Chelanga will attempt to etch his name alongside some of the top distance runners in NCAA history. If he wins the 10K title, Chelanga would become only the sixth men's runner ever to successfully defend his 10K championship at this meet. The most recent back-to-back men's 10K national champion was Texas A&M-Corpus Christi's Shadrack Songok, in 2007 and 2008.

A Race for the Ages

Thursday evening's men's 10K final will mark the first time in NCAA history that three sub-27:30 runners will square off in the same race. Sam Chelanga has dipped under the 27:30 mark twice during his collegiate career, including an NCAA-record 27:08.39 effort at Stanford on 27:08.39.

This year, Arizona's Stephen Sambu ran 27:28.64 at Stanford, with Iona's Leonard Korir following closely behind at 27:29.40.

Distance Doublers

Sam Chelanga is attempting the 5K/10K double at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships for the second year in a row. He is one of six men's runners who will compete in both the 5K and 10K in Des Moines, joining Colorado's Joe Bosshard, Stanford's Chris Derrick and Elliott Heath, Iona's Leonard Korir and Florida State's Ciaran O'Lionaird.

In 2009, Oregon's Galen Rupp won both the 5K and 10K at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships, achieving the feat for the eighth time in meet history.

An Unlikely Story

Considering all of the success Sam Chelanga has enjoyed during his collegiate career, it is remarkable that he did not begin running until after he had graduated from Bartolimo High School in Nairobi, Kenya.

When Chelanga did decide to take up running, he had some phenomenal training partners, including his older brother Joshua Chelanga (2:07:05 marathon runner) and friend Paul Tergat (2:04:55 marathon runner, former world record holder). As they say, the rest is history!



Elliot Galeone

6-5 Redshirt Senior
White Hall, Md.

Men's Javelin

F - Wednesday, 4:05 p.m.

Personal Best

Javelin - 229-5 (69.93m)
4/21/11 - Lexington, Va.

Past NCAA Outdoor

Track Experience

2010

3 fouls in Javelin

2011 Season Notes

Qualified for the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships in the javelin for the second straight year, thanks to a seventh-place finish at the NCAA Division I East Preliminary Round meet

Named Big South Men's Outstanding Field Performer

Became only the second men's athlete in Big South history to sweep the conference discus and javelin titles at the same meet

Broke his own school javelin record twice, boosting it to 229-5 (69.93m) at the Big South Championship

Also threw the discus at the NCAA Division I East Preliminary Round meet, placing 29th

Galeone's 2011 Outdoor Season to Date

Shot Put

46-8.75 (14.24m) – Coastal Carolina Invitational (3/12/11), 7th place

45-8.5 (13.93m) – Shamrock Invitational (3/19/11), 14th place

46-4.25 (14.13m) – Big South (4/22/11), 10th place

Discus

159-10 (48.72m) – Coastal Carolina Invitational (3/12/11), 3rd place

167-1 (50.92m) – Shamrock Invitational (3/19/11), 1st place

159-3 (48.55m) – Raleigh Relays (3/25/11), 7th place

166-2 (50.65m) – Liberty Collegiate Invitational (4/2/11), 3rd place

174-6 (53.20m) – Texas Relays (4/8/11), 3rd place (Section B)

162-4 (49.47m) – Big South (4/23/11), 1st place

163-3 (49.75m) – IC4A (5/14/11), 6th place

166-2 (50.66m) – NCAA East Preliminary Round (5/28/11), 29th place

Javelin

226-9 (69.11m) – Coastal Carolina Invitational (3/11/11), 1st place

221-1 (67.39m) – Shamrock Invitational (3/18/11), 1st place

218-5 (66.59m) – Raleigh Relays (3/26/11), 2nd place

226-5 (69.01m) – Liberty Collegiate Invitational (4/1/11), 1st place

208-4 (63.51m) – Texas Relays (4/8/11), 15th place (Section A)

229-5 (69.93m) – Big South (4/21/11), 1st place

227-5 (69.32m) – Drake Relays (4/29/11), 3rd place

224-9 (68.50m) – Liberty Twilight Qualifier (5/5/11), 1st place

218-6 (66.59m) – IC4A (5/15/11), 5th place

227-8 (69.40m) – NCAA East Preliminary Round (5/26/11), 7th place

Steady Progress

Elliot Galeone, who had never thrown the javelin before enrolling at Liberty in the fall of 2006, has displayed steady progress and improvement in the event. He threw 189-0 (57.62m) as a freshman in 2007, 204-7 (62.37m) as a redshirt sophomore in 2009, 224-3 (68.35m) as a redshirt junior in 2010 and a school-record 229-5 (69.93m) this season.

Keeping the Streak Alive

Elliot Galeone's qualification to Des Moines makes it five straight years a Liberty men's thrower has reached the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships. Jon Hart (hammer) and Clendon Henderson (discus) made the meet together in both 2007 and 2008. John Talbert threw the discus at the 2009 NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships. Now, Galeone has qualified in the javelin in both 2010 and 2011.

Two Milestones in Sight

Elliot Galeone is aiming to break the 70-meter barrier on Wednesday, after coming close on numerous occasions. He threw the javelin between 69 and 70 meters at five different meets this season, getting as close as 69.93 meters at the Big South meet on April 21.

Galeone is also within striking distance of the Big South all-time javelin record of 70.87 meters (232-6), set by Coastal Carolina's Thomas Jordan in 2004.

A Unique Combination

Elliot Galeone is a rare thrower who excels in both the discus and javelin. He won both events at the Big South meet and was one of only two athletes (also Florida's Stipe Zunic) to throw both implements at the NCAA Division I East Preliminary Round meet.

An Unlikely Story, Part 2

Elliot Galeone came to Liberty in the fall of 2006 as a walk-on, after posting modest personal-best marks of 48-5.5 in the shot put and 152-3 in the discus at Fallston High School. He had never picked up a javelin before joining the Flames.

Nearly five years later, Galeone is Liberty's javelin record holder and is preparing to compete at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships for the second straight season.



Kolby Shepherd

*5-8 Redshirt Junior
Dublin, Ga.*

Men's Pole Vault

F - Wednesday, 6:35 p.m.

Personal Bests

PV - 17-7.25 (5.37m)

(indoor best)

1/22/11 - Blacksburg, Va.

PV - 17-6.5 (5.35m)

(outdoor best)

4/9/11 - Austin, Texas

2011 Season Notes

Cleared 17-0.75 (5.20m) on his first attempt at the NCAA Division I East Preliminary Round meet, becoming Liberty's first men's pole vaulter ever to qualify for the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championship

Tied Todd Pettyjohn's long-standing school pole vault record on April 9, when he sailed over 17-6.5 (5.35m) at the Texas Relays

Won his fifth career Big South pole vault title in six appearances at the conference meet, including the indoor and outdoor seasons

Redshirted the 2011 indoor season, but cleared a personal-best 17-7.25 (5.37m) on Jan. 22 at the Hokie Invitational, competing unattached

Shepherd's 2011 Outdoor Season to Date

Pole Vault

16-10.75 (5.15m) – Coastal Carolina Invitational (3/12/11), 1st place

16-0.75 (4.90m) – Shamrock Invitational (3/19/11), 1st place

16-6.75 (5.05m) – Raleigh Relays (3/25/11), 1st place

17-0.75 (5.20m) – Liberty Collegiate Invitational (4/2/11), 1st place

17-6.5 (5.35m) – Texas Relays (4/9/11), 3rd place (Section A)

17-0.75 (5.20m) – Big South (4/23/11), 1st place

17-1 (5.21m) – Liberty Twilight Qualifier (5/5/11), 2nd place

16-6.75 (5.05m) – IC4A (5/14/11), 2nd place

17-0.75 (5.20m) – NCAA East Preliminary Round (5/27/11), T-3rd place

Shepherd's NCAA Pole Vault Predecessors

Although Kolby Shepherd is Liberty's first men's pole vaulter ever to qualify for the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships, he will not be the Flames' first men's athlete to pole vault at the meet. Numerous Liberty competitors have pole vaulted at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships as part of the decathlon competition, and some of them have fared quite well.

In 1993, Todd Pettyjohn set what was then an NCAA Division I meet decathlon pole vault record, clearing 17-0.75 (5.20m). That helped him finish as an All-American. Two years later, Ryan Werner pole vaulted 16-8.75 (5.10m), on his way to a fourth-place showing in the NCAA Division I decathlon competition.

Welcome to the Club

Kolby Shepherd had pole vaulted 17 feet several times while redshirting, but did so for the first time in a Liberty uniform on April 2 at the Liberty Collegiate Invitational. That day, he sailed over 17-0.75 (5.20m), becoming the first Flame to vault 17 feet since Ken Howell in 1999.

Shepherd also became just the fourth Liberty competitor ever to break the 17-foot barrier, joining Howell, Todd Pettyjohn and Michael Prettyman in the exclusive group.

Beginning with the Liberty Collegiate Invitational, Shepherd has vaulted 17 feet or higher in five of his last six meets.

Happy Birthday to You!

Kolby Shepherd celebrated birthday No. 22 in style, April 9 at the Texas Relays in Austin, Texas. He pole vaulted 17-6.5 (5.35m), equaling Todd Pettyjohn's long-standing school record. Pettyjohn had set his mark at the 1993 IC4A meet, and it was Liberty's oldest men's outdoor school record before Shepherd tied it.

Making the Most of His Redshirt Year

When Kolby Shepherd donned a Liberty uniform at the Coastal Carolina Invitational on March 12, it was his first time doing so in over a year. He redshirted both the 2010 outdoor season and 2010-11 indoor campaign.

Shepherd made a couple major breakthroughs during his year of redshirting. He pole vaulted 17 feet for the first time on April 3 at the Liberty Collegiate Invitational, sailing over 17-0.75 (5.20m).

Shepherd then boosted his personal best all the way up to 17-7.25 (5.37m) on Jan. 22 at the Hokie Invitational in Blacksburg, Va. In that meet, he defeated all three of Virginia Tech's Des Moines qualifiers (Joe Davis, Hunter Hall and Jared Jodon) at their home facility.

An Unlikely Story, Part 3

Like Elliot Galeone, Kolby Shepherd was a walk-on when he first joined the Liberty men's track & field team in the fall of 2007. He was a two-time state pole vault champion in Georgia as a high school student at Trinity Christian School, but Shepherd's high school personal-best clearance was just 14-0.

Shepherd has made steady progress throughout his time at Liberty, clearing 16-6.75 (5.05m) in 2008, 17-0.75 (5.20m) in 2010 and 17-7.25 (5.37m) in 2011.