2015 WILDCATS TRACK & FIELD: Preseason Report

By Khayla Gladney

The 2015 men’s and women’s track and field teams plan on continuing their legacy of excelling at West Los Angeles College. Head Coach Dan Fitzpatrick (Coach Dan) said that the team’s goals this year are the same as they have always been, “As a team, we compete to win the Western State Championship, and then be a major presence at the State Championships as we are every year.” For the past three years, West has earned two individual State champions.

Coach Dan said that the student-athletes have worked hard during fall training. After many work outs on stairs, hills, and at beaches and local parks, his people are anxious to start competing. They will open their season on Valentine’s Day at Soka University in Aliso Viejo. Coach Dan added that West has a very team-oriented program. Both the men and women are close and they all get along very well across all the event areas. The team aspect of track and field is stressed and the student-athletes have really bought in.

Returning this season are Keishonda Rose (Fairfax HS) and Taja McKinley (Santa Monica HS) who competed at the 2014 State Championships last season as members of West’s 4x1 and 4x4 relays. Other key team members returning for the women include: MaKenna Powell (Royal HS), Christina Gipson (Culver City HS), and Crystal Miles (Los Angeles HS).

For the men’s squad, Jonathan Douglas (Landstown HS) is back. He has been a top conference competitor in both the 100 and 200 meters. Also back are key team members Joshua Thomas (Dorsey HS), Jomar Jackson (LB Jordan HS), DeAnthony Evans (Culver City HS), Venzel Rucker (Taft HS), and Terrance Duke (West Valley HS).

There will be plenty of new faces this new season as well. The most accomplished newcomers are (Women’s Team) Doshawn Franks, LA City High Jump Champion from Palisades H.S.; and (Men’s Team) Zain Palacio, LA City Triple Jump Champion from Dorsey H.S.

The men’s team is more balanced than last year’s team. They have a nice throws group that has shown dedication, said Coach Dan, and he is looking forward to seeing what they can do in this area where West has struggled. The team also has some good multi-eventers who have improved since the last year. And, he added, the team is solid in the sprints, jumps, hurdles, and middle distance.

This season, the women are very inexperienced and they lack some depth. But the ladies know what the expectations are and they welcome the challenge ahead of them. Coach Dan is excited to see how this young group responds to the stress and duress of competition.

Dan Fitzpatrick has a history of creating championship teams and is well known in the Southern California track and field community. He was honored in 2001 as the California State Honor Coach, and was previously an assistant to U.S. Olympic Coaches. His players are truly in good hands.

GO WEST. GO FAR.