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2-Time Olympic Trials Field Event Finalist:

CSM COACH JASON SMITH CONTINUES INT'L LJ QUEST AFTER 8TH PLACE OLYMPIC TRIALS FINISH

EUGENE, Ore. -- The Olympic and international long jump quest for Jason Smith is now moving into another gear after his solid eighth place finish in Monday night's U.S. Olympic Trials at the University of Oregon's Hayward Field with a jump of 7.87 meters (25 feet, 10 inches).

The College of San Mateo assistant track and field coach will continue his summer competition, along with the other finalists, in hopes of reaching the next level. It appears that, for the first time, no American will achieve the Olympic Games standard -- 8.27 meters (27-1 3/4) for Paris -- in an event the USA has dominated over the past century.

Americans have held the world record for most of that time -- from the days of 1936 Olympic star Jesse Owens to Mike Powell's "current" record leap of 8.95 meters (29-4 1/2) in 1991. Owens' brought the world record to the USA with a jump of 8.13 meters (26-8 1/4) in 1936 -- the same as Smith's best "official" mark, achieved on June 2 in Chula Vista.

No American is assured of a Paris Olympic long jump berth at this time -- unless someone finds an existing meet to achieve the standard by this week's June 30 deadline. World Athletics will use its new ranking system to complete the Olympic field next month. Only nine athletes worldwide have achieved the standard to date.

Smith will, therefore, go on the European circuit next month in hopes of at least improving his World Athletics ranking -- not just for Paris '24, but for the 2025 World Championships.

"I'm looking to be a top 20 athlete in the future," said Smith, a lifelong San Bruno resident. "I now have an agent, who has lined up meets for me next month in Europe. We're going to hit it in July -- and then at post-Olympic Games meets in August -- to improve my world ranking."

He was, previously, a 2021 Olympic Trials finalist in the high jump.

Smith survived a dramatic long jump competition on Monday night, with NBC network coverage using shots of the event (along with complete and now archived coverage on Peacock). His initial jump of 7.85 meters (25-9 1/4) landed in third place at the time and was good enough to reach the final 8 -- but not without some trepidation. After two more solid jumps, 7.78 (25-6 1/4) and a slight improvement to 7.87, Smith held that last top 8 prelim mark. Three more jumpers with superior personal bests had a "last" chance to displace him. "I couldn't even watch," said Smith.

Trials "favorite" Marquis Dendy, with two fouls, managed only 7.62 on his third jump and was out. So was qualifying round co-leader Wes Williams, who fell short at 7.76, and Kemonie Briggs, at 7.63. So, Smith stayed in the top 8 for three more efforts. He failed to improve, however.

"That was similar to at the Indoor Championships this year, when other guys could have passed me," said Smith. He wound up fifth at those USATF championships.

The 2024 Trials champion is Jeremiah Davis, the NCAA runner-up earlier in June for Florida State, who jumped 8.20 (26-11), followed by University of Florida's Malcolm Clemons (out of St. Mary's High, Berkeley, and an Oakland resident) at 8.18 (26-10). Jarrion Lawson also jumped 8.18 (but placed third on the tiebreaker of second best jump). No American jumper has a ticket to Paris yet.

The last (weekly) World Athletics rankings, list the leading Americans as No. 10 Dendy and No. 11 Williams -- the duo who did not make the final 8 at Eugene -- and No. 12 Lawson. Next is No. 23

Clemons. No. 35 Davis should get a boost from his Eugene win. Smith was No. 65 (the ninth American in those ranks), who continues to rise in the rankings. He is currently No. 29 on the world season best marks list with his 8.13 jump earlier this month.

CIRCLING ISSUES: Smith's "actual" personal best is 8.28 meters (27-2), achieved at a 2023 meet at Azusa. The jump was legal in all aspects -- except the meet had not been properly sanctioned under then brand new World Athletics regulations. He was unfairly penalized for a meet director's miscue. That also negatively impacts his world ranking.

Track and Field News does list Smith as the No. 4 American jumper for 2023 -- with that 8.28 mark. Since it is not recognized by World Athletics, USATF does not employ it for official "Development" funding support -- and did not allow Smith to compete in the 2023 USATF championships/World trials, depriving him of world ranking point opportunities.

The official rankings system of World Athletics will also award ranking points for the Olympic Trials qualifying round last Saturday as a separate competition, benefiting athletes who performed well to reach Monday's 12-athlete "finals" but did not advance or place in the Final 8.

There is a bit of controversy surrounding the new jumping surfaces at the updated Hayward Field Stadium (rebuilt for the 2022 World Championships). Lawson is the No. 4 all-time Olympic Trials performer at 8.58 meters (28-1 3/4) and Dendy is No. 5 at 8.42 (27-7 1/2) -- both achieved at the 2016 Trials at the "old" Hayward Field, off a "better" surface and board. This time Dendy could not even make it to the final 8 -- off the new stadium board. And everyone fell short of the Olympic standard.

"The boards at the new stadium are not ample for good jumps," said Smith.

Current CSM head coach Kajari Burns, who was the coach at Riordan High in San Francisco when Smith started in track a decade ago, now tutors his assistant at College Heights and was on the sidelines in Eugene over the weekend.

Burns has been looking for official meets for Smith to enter and is also working with the new agent. "Jason has a slate of meets in Europe," said Burns, "starting on July 9 in Ireland, and then on July 17 and 20."

At Riordan, Smith won the 2016 CCS long jump title and was fourth in the CIF state meet, then went onto an outstanding collegiate career at Cal State Long Beach, winning Big West Conference titles in the long jump, high jump, and triple jump.

CSM OLYMPIC HERITAGE: CSM continues its long Olympic related tradition dating to 1936 -- when former Bulldogs star Archie Williams won the Olympic 400 meters in Berlin. CSM also has 3-time Olympian Pat Daniels Connolly, who competed in the first Olympic pentathlon in 1964 (while attending CSM) and remains an advocate for the women's decathlon – an official competition held recently at CSM's international track stadium.

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