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VS Athletics 2008 U.S. Olympic Trials Report-I

Monday, June 30

JEFF RYAN ADVANCES TO MEN'S POLE VAULT FINAL

EUGENE, OR—On the opening day of the 2008 U.S. Olympic Trials, **Jeff Ryan** advanced to the final of the Men's pole vault. Jeff cleared 5.40m on his first attempt, then had a huge clearance at **5.50m (18' ½")** to earn a place in the 12-man final on Sunday. Those who did not advance included 2000 Olympic Champion, Nick Hysong. Unfortunately, Jeff didn't fare as well in the final in which he no-heighted. He was the first of five vaulters scheduled to enter the competition at the 5.40m (17' 8 ½") opening height. However, shortly after missing his initial attempt, he was told he had 90-seconds to complete a 2nd jump after the other 4 vaulters passed. Unprepared to jump again so soon, Jeff missed his 2nd jump at 5.40m. His request for more time before his next attempt was denied—and he was right back in the same situation of having to get back on the runway for his 3rd attempt. Afterward, Jeff said, "I've never been one to get involved in the height-passing game and this time I really got stung. I should have passed to 5.50m after my first miss at 5.40m."

Also competing in the first 4-days of the Olympic Trials for VS Athletics were **Blessing Ufodiana** in the Women's Triple Jump and **Ben Clark** in the Men's 400m Hurdles. In flight-2 of the Triple Jump qualifying round, Blessing opened with a jump of **13.14m (43' ½")**. Her 2nd jump was a narrow board foul in the 44 ½ foot range that would have gotten her to the finals. On her 3rd jump she had a huge hop phase, but couldn't hold the landing and ran through the pit. Afterward, Blessing said, "What I learned today is that competing in a meet like this is all mental. Going forward, that's where I'm going to make my biggest improvement."

In the Men's 400m Hurdles, **Ben Clark** also had a day where things weren't clicking on all cylinders. Drawing lane-8 in heat-1 of the prelims (the 8th time he's had the outside-most lane in 11 races this season) he got out well and was with the leaders before stuttering at hurdle-5 and quickly dropping back into 4th place. Then his lead leg buckled upon landing after hurdle-7. Somehow, Ben kept from falling. But his stumble left him in 8th place at the finish line in **50.88**. "I'm very disappointed, he said afterward. I'm a good technical hurdler and this was a very poor technical race. 50.35 made the semi-final and I should have been one of them."

"We share their disappointment, observed Club Executive Director, Skip Stolley, but remain very proud of Jeff, Blessing, and Ben. Jeff has developed into one of America's top-12 vaulters and will be a 19-foot jumper soon. After a 3-year hiatus from the sport during which she had her first child, Blessing has had a terrific comeback year raising her PR to 43' 5 ½" and qualifying for the Olympic Trials. Next year, she'll be competing at the international level. And we believe Ben is at the doorstep of being a star. He brings 46-low 400 meter speed and good hurdle skills to the event and has made a good transition to a new locale (Los Angeles), a new coach (Cedric Hill), and a new training program. 2009 will be a breakout year for him."

After two rest days, the U.S. Olympic Trials resume on Thursday, July 3. Competing for VS Athletics will be **Ronald Carter** (Men's Triple Jump), **Brent Gray** (Men's 200 meters), **Ashley Lodree** (Women's 100m Hurdles), **Matt Carter** (Men's High Jump), and **Aris Borjas** (Men's Javelin).

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