

# Berry chasing Smith as top U.S. javelin thrower

By Ashley Conklin  
Emerald Sports Editor

It seems certain that Oregon's Paula Berry will someday supplant Karin Smith as America's top women's javelin thrower.

Smith, who will turn 36 in August, sees the day coming. But in the meantime, Smith is still at the top, and Berry is try-

ing to adjust to her newfound stardom.

After Berry won the NCAA javelin title at Hayward Field earlier this month, the two hooked up at The Athletics Congress national championships in New York, where Smith won her seventh TAC title and Berry was runner-up.

The two met again last Friday

at the Prefontaine Classic, where Smith once again bested Berry. Smith's winning throw was 199-9, with Berry right behind at 194-4.

Afterward, Berry talked about what Smith means to her and the sport.

"She called me a couple times during the season," Berry said. "She called and congratu-

lated me after I threw 202 and said good job, and she called me up before NCAAAs and wished me luck.

"She truly likes the sport."

Not only is Berry trying to replace Smith as America's top thrower, Berry is also chasing Smith's collegiate record of 211-5.

Although her collegiate ca-

reer is over, Berry will technically remain a collegiate, and a contender for the NCAA record, until the end of the summer.

Berry is also shooting for the school record of 202-3, set by Lynda Hughes in 1982.

Berry has even followed Smith's advice by going to Europe and competing to gain some international experience.

Last summer, both Berry and USC's Ashley Selman competed in Europe, and both will do the same this season at Smith's urging.

"I had suggested last year to Sally (Harmon, Oregon throws coach) that if it did work out for Paula that she should go over to Europe and get some international experience," Smith said. "I think that's really helped Paula this season."

After coming on late in the season last year by winning the Pacific-10 Conference title at 178-1 and finishing second to Selman at the NCAA meet, Berry quickly hit her stride and kept improving this season.

She qualified for the NCAAAs in her first meet of the season, the Oregon Preview. She then got her first personal record of the season with a throw of 182-3 in a dual meet with Washington.

Berry followed up with a win at the Pepsi Team Invitational and with runner-up showings at the Mt. SAC Relays and the Gatorade Invitational in Gainesville, Fla., before she unleashed a PR of 197-7 at the Minnesota Invitational.

After a week off, Berry won her second Pac-10 title with a throw of 193-8, a new meet record. Her best showing was at the Les Steers Open, where she had five throws of more than 180 feet and three better than 190 feet, including her 202-1 PR.

Despite bad headwinds, she threw 188-5 to win the NCAA meet and threw 191-7 to finish second to Smith at TAC.

Berry and Selman will be back in Europe next month, competing on an international circuit in Finland that consists of six meets.

Smith will also be on hand for the meets and says it should be a good experience for Berry.

"Competing over there last year was obviously very good for Paula," Smith said. "I know the Finns are excited to have her back."

As the top two collegiate finishers at TAC, Berry and Selman will compete in the World University Games in Sheffield, England, July 19-25. Then it's off to the World Championships in Tokyo on Aug. 24-Sept. 1 for both Berry and Smith.

Somewhere along the line, Smith sees Berry breaking her collegiate record.

"I think Paula can throw further," Smith said. "I think she has a lot of 200-plus throws in her, and I think she'll surprise some people at Tokyo."

Berry is surprised she's reached the level she has so soon, chasing the likes of Smith, who is a four-time Olympian and a seven-time TAC champ.

"I never dreamed I'd be chasing a four-time Olympian," Berry said. "I'm still trying to get used to it."

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