

## **“At BU’s Valentine Invitational, Professional and Collegiate Talent Take on the World’s Fastest Indoor Track”**

52 miles run under four minutes. Multiple top-10 all-time collegiate finishes. An American record attempt, missed by mere tenths of a second.

The David Hemery Valentine Invitational — which took place on Friday and Saturday at Boston University’s Track and Tennis Center — hosted a variety of competitors, with more than 6,000 athletes entered, according to the preliminary performance list. The talent ranged from NCAA runners to world-renowned Olympians.

The weekend’s activities were split between the two days, with women’s events taking place on Friday and men’s on Saturday. The distance medley relays took place on opposing days.

With thousands of athletes entered in the meet each day — more than 400 men competed in the one mile run alone, according to results posted on the BU athletics website — the races stretched late into the night, with Saturday’s events concluding past midnight.

Among the highlights of the weekend for the professional women included Danielle “Dani” Jones, member of New Balance’s “Team Boss” training group, sprinting to the second-best all-time mark for an American woman in the 1000 meters. Emily MacKay, member of “Team New Balance Boston”, also set a leading mark for the United States in the women’s 3000 meters.

Cory Ann McGee, Jones’ teammate and a 2020 Olympian representing the United States, remarked on the value of traveling to BU to compete. “If you want to run fast indoors, Boston is the place to be,” said McGee.

McGee spoke of the BU facilities with reverence. “We’re based in Colorado, but we find ourselves coming to Boston every winter...the BU track is one of a kind. It’s so special.”

Boston University's women's track-and-field talent was also showcased on Friday — multiple BU top-ten all-time marks were set, ranging from the weight throw to the 5000 meter run.

On Saturday, the Valentine Invitational wrote its own name in the record books: 52 men — including BU's Foster Mallack, a senior — dipped below the sub-four-minute mile barrier, the most athletes in history to achieve the mark at one event.

While the times were the main talk of the weekend, there was another star amongst the crowd — the track itself.

"It's no secret that this is a fast track", said Diljeet Taylor, head women's cross country coach and associate director of track and field at Brigham Young University. "We're willing to fly across the country [from Utah] just to get a chance to feel some of the Boston magic."

This perspective — shared also on Boston University's Athletics website, which names BU as holding the "fastest indoor track in the world" — can be attributed to more than just magic.

BU's indoor track, which was constructed in 2002, hosts a "Rekortan surface" as well as "18.5 degree banking", according to BU's Athletics website. It also features a plywood substructure, one of few indoor tracks in the world to do so.

Geoffrey Burns, a sports physiologist for the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committees and Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan, noted that the banks — as well as BU's highly-reboundable plywood structure — are key to the fast times run at meets such as Valentine.

"Not many other tracks in the country are built like [Boston's]," said Burns. "The original architects [created] a very fast track."

When asked if such times could have been run at any other location, his reply was short: "No."

“Even if [an athlete] broke such a record at another location”, Burns said, “they would still run faster at BU.”

While the Valentine Invite marks the end of BU’s indoor hosting season, the team is already looking forward to next year, with even bigger hopes for what BU indoor track meets can make happen.

“When people watch, attend or compete at our meets, they’re being exposed to what Boston University has to offer [to] prospective students and athletes,” said Jordan Carpenter, associate head cross country and assistant track and field coach at Boston University. “I think [the meets] play a major role in recruiting talented prospective students into our program.”

And the perks of meets such as the Valentine Invitational go further than helping to recruit new runners to BU. They contribute to the funding — and longevity — of the entire BU track and field organization.

“Our meets provide so many different benefits to our program...BU is one of only a handful of track and field programs in the country that bring in significant amounts of revenue to the University,” Carpenter remarked. “

“[These meets] allow us to provide incredible experiences for our student-athletes.”