

Baylor freshman pole vaulter beats personal best score, secures first place overall

By: Kaitlin Sides | Reporter

Baylor Track and Field hosted the 2024 Michael Johnson Invitational this weekend, and despite some bad weather, a new personal best was made.

Freshman [Molly Haywood](#), from Houston, Texas, had a personal best of 14-6 in pole vaulting in high school and set a new record this weekend.

“Back in high school, I practiced mainly with guys,” Haywood said. “There weren’t a ton of girls. So, coming here and having someone that I’m actually competing with is really cool.”

Haywood was the 2022 Texas 6A pole vault champion with a meet-record 14-3 and cleared a personal best of 14-6 to win the 2023 Tomball Memorial Wildcat Relays. Throughout her meets in high school, she went over the 14-foot mark in 13 meets.

Along with her stellar high school track career, she competed on American Ninja Warrior Junior in [2018](#).

But this weekend, she beat her own personal best, finishing first at 4.46 meters (14-7 ½) on Friday.

“I’ve been working super hard all indoor season, training up for this, just trying to work on technique and adjusting to a new school, new coaches, all that kind of thing,” Haywood said. “So, I think it’s super exciting to see it all kind of start to come together.

“I feel like over time, you kind of learn what works for you, what doesn’t. And that’s part of the fun of it is you’re trying to figure out, ‘Okay, this didn’t work, this did work.’ And you’re trying to piece together all the little details because when you put all of it together, that’s when the big marks are going to start to come.”

Haywood said she still feels there's more room to grow and that she could have been better in the meet, despite beating her personal record.

“I think if we can make sure that we’re drilling techniques the next couple of weeks and not just like chasing the PR and kind of like throwing out technique just to get the higher heights, I feel like we can kind of settle in a little bit now and go and work on all those technical things so that we can bring it to Big 12’s and get those even bigger heights,” Haywood said.

Although this meet was successful for Haywood, there were some challenges with threatening weather.

Baylor Track and Field coach Michael Ford said he decided to call off the meet Saturday at around 4 P.M. because he didn’t want to risk any injuries this late in the season.

“I don’t play around with the lightning,” Ford said. “I don’t like delays, honestly, with the kids warming up, then cooling down, then warming back up. I worry about that.”

Ford said he believes the team got enough work done this week, and now it's time to go get ready for Arizona.

After competing in the Desert Heat Classic next Saturday in Tucson, Ariz., Baylor will host the Big 12 Outdoor Championship May 9-11 back at Clyde Hart Track and Field Stadium.