

Track's Tonnesen aims for NCAA title, Olympics

By Hunter McAdams | Published 01/29/16 9:00am | Updated 01/29/16 9:45am

Qualification for the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, an appearance in the 2015 World Championships, Pac-12 Conference field athlete of the year, Pac-12 champion and a second place finish in the 2015 NCAA Championships.

These are just some of the achievements and accolades Arizona redshirt senior Pau Tonnesen has obtained over his past two seasons competing for the Arizona track and field team.

A few years ago, these accomplishments seemed far-reaching for the Tempe native, who began his track and field career sophomore year of high school at Tempe Preparatory Academy.

Tonnesen took up a variety of track events, from the 110-meter hurdles to the triple jump.

"I went to a really small school and it was in a very small division. I thought I was competing very well but in reality the competition was not very good," Tonnesen said.

While Tonnesen had not gained the attention of any large colleges coming out of high school, he wanted to keep competing in track and field. He enrolled at Mesa Community College, a school that was happy to have him compete for its program.

At Mesa, Tonnesen was introduced to the decathlon, an event that would define his career in the years to come.

By the end of Tonnesen's second season at Mesa, he was receiving attention from many schools including the UA and ASU.

Tonnesen made the decision to come to the UA, excited for the new opportunities, but timid about the higher competition level.

"I have always been confident in myself but once I got to competing in D1 competition, I thought that was the end of my 'winning streak,'" Tonnesen said. "I was successful in high school and at Mesa Community College. I have been fortunate and have competed well [at Arizona] so far. I have definitely surprised myself."

In Tonnesen's eyes, he has "competed well" at UA. To others, that might be a bit of an understatement. The list of Tonnesen's accolades is a long one.

In his junior season alone, Tonnesen was named 2015 Pac-12 Field Athlete of the Year, 2015 Pac-12 Champion (Decathlon), 2015 NCAA All-American First-team (Decathlon) and 2015 NCAA Championship Runner-Up (Decathlon).

Of all these achievements, Tonnesen holds one above the rest.

"I'd definitely say I'm most proud of my decathlon score at the NCAA Championships," Tonnesen said. "It qualified me for the 2015 World Championships and the 2016 Olympics in Rio."

Tonnesen said he is excited about his team's performances so far and the energy he sees his teammates have.

"I have dreamt about it since I was a kid so it feels strange that it is going to happen now as long as I can stay injury free, I will continue to train through the end of the track season until the Olympics," said Tonnesen.

First comes Tonnesen's final season at Arizona.

"It is great seeing my teammates do well. If they don't do well then it is not as fun, it is great because you can share the success and happiness with each other," Tonnesen said. "That is part of being on

a team.”

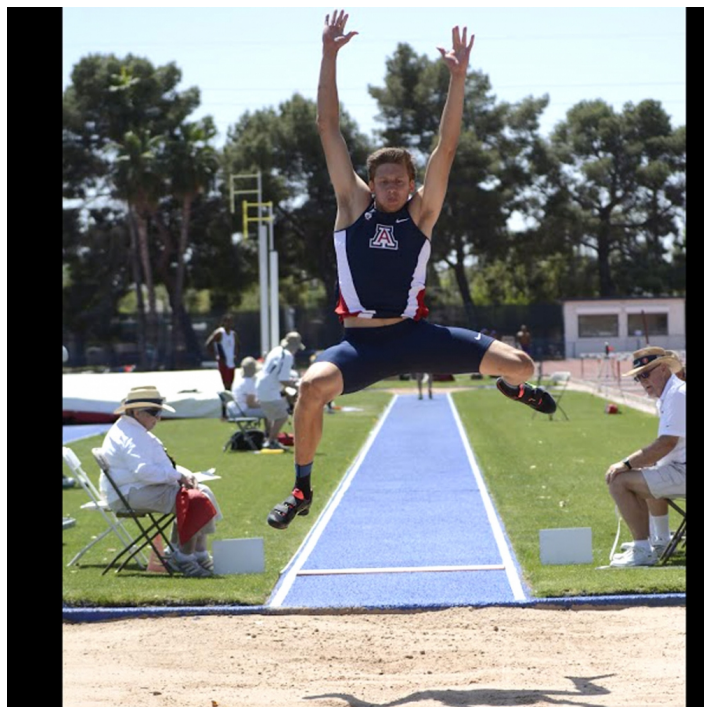
What’s Tonnesen’s goal for his last season as a Wildcat?

“I would like to win at least the heptathlon or the decathlon nationally,” Tonnesen said. “It is going to be difficult with a lot of good athletes returning, but that is a personal goal I have set for myself.”

The next step to taking care of business for Tonnesen is the upcoming meet that he and the rest of the UA track and field team are competing in.

The Track Cats will be traveling to Seattle to compete in the University of Washington Invitational. The meet is set to start Friday at 5 p.m.

Follow Hunter McAdams on [Twitter](#).



By Sydney Richardson / The Daily Wildcat
Arizona track and field combined events athlete Pau Tonnesen long jumps during Arizona's third-place finish at the Jim Click Shootout in 2015 at Roy P. Drachman Stadium. Tonnesen was named the Pac-12 Men’s Field Athlete of the Week for his performance over the weekend.

[Log In](#)

[Tweet](#)