All learning institutions take pride in academics, integrity, and athletics. EMU has much reason to; we are represented nationally by three track athletes. Lori Abbot, Kai Orenic, and Adam Starks have all qualified for the NCAA Division III Track meet at one point in their careers, and the upcoming outdoor season may see them rise to the top again. Abbot ran a national qualifying time in the 100 meters last week at Bridgewater, but due to a faulty timing system cannot count the stellar performance to her quest. Orenic has inched closer to making the 400 meter mark with every race, and Starks has already hit a provisional time in the 400 meter intermediate hurdles and the 110 meter high hurdles.

Abbot, a fifth-year student who did not run last year, is back, to the surprise of other ODAC sprinters who now finish with a blue EMU speed suit flashing in their face as she smokes them. A perennial national qualifier, she has cracked the national list in either the 100 meter or 400 meter every full season she has run, but injuries and burnout have hampered her along the way.

"I would like to qualify in the 100, 200, and 400," said Abbot; "But they are very different from one another and you need a certain training schedule for each one.

A 400 is neither a long or short event; it is its own category, requiring speed but also tremendous endurance. "I will probably have to choose an event and focus on it," Abbot added.

Kai Orenic was originally recruited by Coach Paul Johnson to be a short sprinter. "When Kai first came to EMU he was strictly a 100-200 guy," Johnson said. "But he competed in a decathlon and ran a 49 in the 400, and we discovered his bread and butter event."

Orenic holds the school record in the 400 meter dash, and finished ninth in the United States last year.

"We flew to St. Paul, Minnesota on Wednesday, but I didn’t run until Friday. The down time was tense," Orenic said of his experience. "When we went to the track for practice, I really got excited."

Orenic finished ninth place, one spot shy of making All-American. "Not beating that one guy motivated me for this season," he said.

Adam Starks qualified in the 110 high and 400 intermediate hurdles last year after two injury-plagued seasons. Thus far, he has qualified provisionally; he is not guaranteed a spot in the national field.

"Right now I’m second in the nation, but I need to improve my time if I want to stay there," Starks said. "I need to work more to accomplish my goal."

As the sole male senior on the squad, he has set a good example for the green first-years on values of hard work and full effort. EMU would love to see him return in a leadership position, but the future is unknown.

EMU’s track team has progressed over the years, and thanks to standouts like Abbot, Orenic, and Starks, the program is on its way up.

Royal Wrap-Up

Thursday, Apr. 3
Softball vs. Roanoke, L 0-21, 2-11
Baseball vs. Southern Virginia, W 13-9
(W) Tennis vs. Bridgewater, L 2-7

Saturday, Apr. 5
(M) Volleyball vs. Mount St. Vincent, W 3-1
(M) Volleyball vs. Hunter, W 3-1
(M) Volleyball vs. Stevens Tech, L 2-3
Baseball vs. Emory & Henry, W 4-2
Softball vs. Emory & Henry, L 0-17
(W) Tennis vs. Guilford, W 7-2

Sunday, Apr. 6
Baseball vs. Emory & Henry, W 4-3
Softball vs. Emory & Henry, L 1-15