

Oklahoma athlete to go to Youth Olympics



Sarah Tolson, 17, of Pawhuska practices discus throwing while her trainer, Caleb Seal, watches at the Owasso Eighth-Grade Center in Owasso. Tolson will represent the U.S. this summer in the Youth Olympic games in Singapore. JAMES GIBBARD / Tulsa World

gold medal by one inch.

"Losing by an inch at state is what really pushed me," Tolson said. "It's what got me really into it."

Being so close to first place caused her to turn discus throwing from a just-for-fun activity into a serious hobby. She dedicated herself to the sport and began working more with Caleb Seal, a private throwing coach based in Owasso.

The extra effort has paid off.

Tolson is one of 80 athletes who will represent the United States in the inaugural Youth Olympic Games, which features more than 3,600 athletes from 205 countries.

She's scheduled to leave Monday for Singapore, with a bag full of red, white and blue shoes, shirts and jackets.

"Every time I look at it, I get more excited," Tolson said.

Tolson established herself as one of the country's top young throwers in 2009 when she won the discus at the USA Track and Field Junior Olympics. But when she tried out for the world youth championships that summer, she placed third, missing out on international competition by - you guessed it - one inch.

"That inch just gets me," Tolson said.

Tolson avenged that loss in April with a throw of 140 feet in the Youth Olympic trials in Arlington, Texas. But she had to wait a month until the United States Olympic Committee named its team.

By MATT BAKER World Sports Writer
Published: 8/9/2010 2:19 AM

Last Modified: 8/9/2010 3:49 AM

Sarah Tolson's 10,000-mile journey to this month's Youth Olympic Games in Singapore started with one frustrating inch.

Then a freshman at Pawhuska, Tolson finished second in the discus at the 2008 state meet, missing out on a

Her parents made her wait even longer.

The announcement came in a conference call when Tolson was on the way to the Class 3A state track meet. Her parents knew she made the team but waited to tell her until after her discus throw.

"It could really get her excited and she could blow it," said her mother, Sheila Tolson, "and we didn't want any distractions."

Tolson won her second state title in a row, breaking the 3A state meet record with a throw of 148 feet, 6 inches.

Tolson has spent much of the summer working with Seal to improve her strength and technique before the Aug. 17 preliminaries. The finals are Aug. 21.

Tolson said she hopes to earn a college scholarship - she's being recruited by most of the Big 12, including the University of Oklahoma - and that her dream is to compete in the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

"If she keeps working the way she's working," Seal said, "I pretty much can say the sky's the limit for Sarah."

Original Print Headline: An extra inch of dedication

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