

Athlete Profile
Michael Robertson

By Nicole Moreno

Pacific Association Communications Intern

Discus thrower **Michael Robertson**, born and raised in Arkansas, was bit by the track and field bug when he was only 12 years old. Little did he envision that within another 12 years he would win an NCAA individual championship title while competing for Stanford University and then become a national USA Track & Field champion.

Robertson, 23, won the men's discus throw competition at the 2007 AT&T USA Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Indianapolis, Indiana last month. His winning throw was 210 feet, 1 inch/64.04 meters.



Kyle Terada Photo / Stanford Athletics

The win qualified Robertson for the U.S. team that will compete at the IAAF World Championships in Athletics in Osaka, Japan, August 25-September 2. The top three athletes in each event at the USA Championships qualified for the World Championship team. Robertson, however, still needed to achieve the IAAF "A" standard for the discus throw (64.50m) to ensure a trip to Osaka.

Subsequently, Robertson was chosen for the Team USA Pan American Games roster that will compete in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 13-29.

"I still didn't know I was going until I went up to the World Championship team coach and he said 'anyone who made first place qualified for the team,'" said Robertson. "My smile went ear to ear."

In the opening rounds at USA nationals, Robertson had some trouble and was ranking

low. After a 15-minute break, he went into the sixth round with new motivation. The 2005 NCAA Division I titlist, who was NCAA runner-up this year, then made a big throw to garner his first USATF national crown.

“I lost my groove a little bit in the first two rounds, but then I got myself back into my groove,” said Robertson.

Robertson is a 2007 Stanford graduate. With the assistance of a track and field scholarship, he studied Economics. Robertson attended Southern Methodist College before transferring to Stanford. He would like to continue training in California although he is still looking at his options. He recently applied for a slot in the USOC’s Olympics Job Opportunities Program which is sponsored by The Home Depot. The Home Depot allows U.S. Olympic and Paralympic athletes and hopefuls to work part time in exchange for full-time compensation and benefits. The program helps to accommodate the athletes’ busy training and competition schedules.

Robertson’s track and field career started in 1996 at the impressionable age of 13. He was inspired by the athletes he saw throwing the discus.

“I remember seeing the guys and thinking, wow, they look like football players,” said Robertson.

Robertson’s mother works for the U.S. government, and in 1998 she was transferred to a U.S. embassy in Europe. That allowed Robertson to compete overseas as a teenager.

During his high school years in Belgium the competition became more intense. He faced that intensity and became a four-time state high school champion in the discus. In his senior year, Robertson was the 2002 U.S. Junior National champion in the discus.

In 2005, at Southern Methodist University, he set a school discus record of 202-5 at the Mt. SAC Relays. He also was selected as an NCAA All-American in the discus. Robertson also owns the Stanford University school discus record (205-09/62.71m).

“I’m real proud of the consistency,” said Robertson.

Robertson’s coach of three years, Stanford’s throws coach Robert Weir, has noticed his competitive drive.

“His discus throwing is very important to him. He sticks to his training,” said Weir.

Robertson’s parents, George and Deborah, have supported their son since his days as a young athlete. His mother used to drive him to meets all around Florida. His dad helped train him, although his track and field knowledge was limited. To this day, Robertson’s parents still accompany him on training jaunts.

For 2008, an Olympic year, Robertson is planning to give it his all. He is currently training hard over the summer in his home state of Arkansas. His training consists of warm-ups, weight lifting, and throwing. He trains at two local gyms.

Robertson would like to make track and field his career, although he admits that he still has a lot to learn as a professional.

Coach Weir said he is pleased with Robertson's progress to the top of the U.S. ranks.

"I see Michael going to the Olympic Games and beyond," said Weir.

Besides training and competing, Robertson enjoys having barbecues with friends, mainly composed of his teammates. He also enjoys watching movies.

"I pretty much live the domestic life," Robertson said. "Relaxing at home, baking, and cooking. I also like to read a lot. We didn't have a TV at our place [at Stanford] so I didn't get distracted."

If Robertson fails to reach his goals in track and field, he will go into finance work or consulting. At this point, he is seeking financial stability, and the USOC Olympic Job Opportunities Program can help. He will continue to practice and compete wherever the field will take him. If Robertson's drive and dedication in athletics takes him to the next level—perhaps, even to the Olympic Games—it will sit just fine with him.