

# Clay Campbell has successful year at Mesa CC

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*CLAY CAMPBELL, a 2015 graduate of Verrado High School, spins around to generate momentum before releasing the hammer. Campbell competed for Mesa Community College as a freshman and took third place at nationals, throwing the hammer 56.64 meters. Submitted photo*

## *Verrado grad takes 3rd at nationals in hammer throw*

Stop. Hammer time.

The track and field hammer throw, that is, something 2015 Verrado graduate Clay Campbell did very well for Mesa Community College this year.

Campbell threw the hammer 56.64 meters — or 185 feet, 10 inches — in the National Junior College Athletic Association Division I Outdoor Championships May 17-19. The throw earned him third place.

“I was by far the youngest person there, and just competing at my age was huge,” Campbell said. “Coming in [ranked] eighth place and getting third was awesome.”

The distance was a personal best for Campbell, and was simply the product of being ready, he said.

“I had three days to prepare. I’ve been practicing the whole year, and my coach is very good at knowing how to get his athletes to peak at a certain point, which that was my time, and it worked,” Campbell said.

His coach, an assistant track coach at MCC, is Colin Post. Post said Campbell’s success can be attributed to how hard he works and the fact that he really takes to the event.

“I don’t know what it is that makes him special, but some guys just pick it up and the brain processes it the right way, and he’s one of them,” Post said.

Campbell is one of three hammer throwers from MCC who scored points for the team at nationals. Josh Hamberlin took second at 60.53 meters, while Jacob McBride was fifth at 55.53.

“Myself and Josh, we both beat our PRs by at least three feet, and that wasn’t expected at all,” Campbell said. “We didn’t really have that big of a chance to get anywhere near placing as a team, but we wanted to individually do our best, and we did.”

Mesa finished fifth as a team with 51 points, while South Plains College, Texas, won with 146.

Still, having two other competitors close in ability helped push Campbell throughout the season.

“That was the hardest thing I ever had to do; every week I’d get better, but they’d also get better, so I’d have to work twice as hard to stay close to them,” Campbell said.

Post added that having the three of them push each other all year made it a lot of fun.

“They were challenging each other every day at practice, really trying to one-up the other guy, so it was pretty fun to watch,” Post said. “They went back and forth. Clay got up there a couple times, then Josh, then

Jacob. I didn't know who was going to throw the farthest in the end. It was different every week for me, too."

By placing third at nationals, Campbell also earned NJCAA All-American Honorable Mention.

En route to nationals, MCC won the Arizona Community College Athletic Conference meet, and also captured the Region I title. The ACCAC championship was MCC's first in 28 years.

"It was awesome," Campbell said. "Nationals, I was much more excited, but being a part of that [ACCAC title] was huge. That was one of my biggest accomplishments, being a part of that team."

## **Learning the hammer**

Campbell didn't pick up the hammer until the summer following his sophomore year of high school, doing so on a recommendation from his father, Ted Campbell, who was the track and field coach at Verrado.

"He never did it, but thought I'd be good at it," Clay said. "He said it was because of my build. He kind of has an eye for that."

The hammer is not an event during the high school season, but Clay took to it and competed in summer track and field events. He got help from Post by the end of his junior year of high school.

"We've gone through two seasons together now, his senior year of high school and last year," Post said. "When you come out of high school and go into college, the weight goes up. He went from a 12-pound hammer to a 16-pound hammer, but he didn't lose anything. That's really hard to do making that big of a jump in weight, but he seemed to handle the heavier implement better in college than he did the lighter one."

Clay said the technique of the throw is hard to explain, but that it goes against everything your body is used to doing.

"You have to be patient with everything, you can't push it, you can't get ahead," Clay said. "You have to be overall well balanced and focused on every little thing you do."

Post said the biggest thing about working with Clay is getting him repetitions.

“Technically, with the young guys, it’s just throwing it a lot,” Post said. “That’s one of our biggest advantages is we throw more than the other schools do when it comes to the hammer. It’s my event, too, I still compete in it myself. We throw the event every day and I kind of beat the technique into them.”

Post is scheduled to compete in the U.S. Olympic Team Trials today in Salem, Ore. His personal best throw is 69.64 meters. His goal for Clay next year is to get him over 60.

“I think the next goal for him is to try to break 200 feet,” Post said. “That’s the big milestone everybody tries to get over early in college. He’s got a great shot at it. He threw 56 meters, 185 feet, so we’ll try to put another 15-20 feet on that throw and he’s got a good shot at breaking the school record, which is just over 60 meters.”

Clay has one more year at Mesa and said he wants to transfer to a four-year school after that to continue throwing the hammer.

“I want to stay at Mesa as long as I can,” Campbell said. “My coach, he’s the reason I’ve thrown so far throughout high school and college.”

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