

# Sander shines on track, in classroom for Emporia State



Emporia State sophomore, and Louisburg High School graduate, Wyatt Sander had a successful track season for the Hornets as he earned All-American status for the 4×400-meter relay in both the indoor and outdoor seasons.

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EMPORIA – Wyatt Sander joined the Emporia State track and field team two years ago wondering where his place was going to be on the Hornet roster.

Sander seems to have found the right fit. The Emporia State sophomore is now an indoor and outdoor All-American.

The 2014 Louisburg High School graduate was a member of the Hornet 4×400-meter relay team that finished fifth at the NCAA Outdoor Championships in Florida in late May. Sander, who runs the third leg of the relay, helped the team to a time of 3 minutes and 9.53 seconds.

Earlier in May, Sander, along with teammates Duke Tibbs, Parker Evans and Taysean Goodwin, won the 4×400 relay at the MIAA Championships.

It turned out to be the perfect ending for what has been a long season.

“To get down to Florida and be back at the national meet was a great experience all around,” Sander said. “We went to the

meet hoping to finish in the top eight because that meant we would become All-Americans again. I knew we could do it too because during the whole outdoor season we never ran to our full potential it felt like. We finished second overall in the collegiate division at Drake Relays so that gave us a big confidence boost before our conference meet and before nationals.

“To earn the All-American status is one of the best feelings I’ve had in my athletic career. All of us on the relay team went a little crazy on the infield when we saw that we made it in the finals for the 4×4 outdoor. Probably the only feeling better would be to become a national champion.”

Sander also helped the Hornets throughout the season in the hurdles as he finished fourth and sixth, respectively, in the 400- and 110-meter hurdles at the MIAA Championships.

Still, it has been the 4×400 relay where Sander has thrived and it all started during his indoor season. Sander, along with Evans, Goodwin and Luke Stenzel, shattered the 32-year-old MIAA indoor record by three seconds in 3:13.71.

The team also broke the Emporia State school record by four seconds and went on to finish sixth in the nation in the NCAA Indoor Championships to earn All-American status there as well.

Sander was also a part of Emporia’s distance medley relay team that took third at the MIAA Championships. He also finished sixth in the conference in the high hurdles during the indoor season.

“Indoor really set the tone for me, I believe, for the rest of the season and maybe even for the rest of my career at ESU,” Sander said. “When we won the indoor title it was a great feeling because not only did we beat the meet record, we were able to clinch our spot at the indoor nationals and get a conference title.”

As well as Sander has performed on the track, he has fared even better in the classroom and the school rewarded him for it. In early May, Sander was awarded the school's Undergraduate Award of Excellence.



**Wyatt Sander (second, from left) receives the Undergraduate Award of Excellence from Emporia State in early May.**

The award is given to an outstanding male and female underclass student athlete who excels in athletics and academics. Sander has a 3.94 grade point average and is a member of the Emporia State Athletic Director's Honor Roll, the MIAA Academic Honor Roll and is an MIAA Scholar-Athlete.

"Generally all the awards given at the athletics banquet go to the seniors with the occasional junior in the mix so I figured the undergraduate award was going to go to a junior, someone who has had more time at ESU to establish themselves," Sander said. "When I heard my name called it was a complete shock. Walking up to the front of the big ballroom we were in, my heart was racing due to excitement and some nerves. It was definitely an honor to receive that award. I hope I can maybe get it again next year, but just to receive it once is awesome."

Life as a college athlete is never easy as students are constantly trying to divide their time between academics and athletics, which makes the award an even bigger accomplishment for Sander.

“Things do get very stressful with balancing school work and athletics,” Sander said. “You really have to buckle down and have your priorities straight. If you don’t have your school work at the top of your list, followed by your athletics, and you let other extracurricular activities take priority then you will see a major decline in your academics as well as your performance athletically.

“People generally worry that playing college sports takes up all your time, which don’t get me wrong it takes up a lot of time, but if you manage your time wisely and find what works best for you it becomes much easier to balance your academics, your athletics and your social life.”

As good of a year as Sander had, he is looking toward bigger and better things next season with the Hornets.

“Some great things happened this last year for me athletically, so my goals are to just improve upon those accomplishments,” Sander said. “If for some reason I can’t improve then I at least want to repeat the accomplishments, I don’t want to do any worse. My goals are to be conference champions and All-Americans in the 4×4 for both indoor and outdoor seasons, but I also want to improve individually in my hurdle races. I am really looking forward to it.”