

# Boeing Classic meet showcases top runners

By: Danielle Da Silva

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Local amateur track and field athletes will wrap up the indoor club season this weekend at the Boeing Classic Track and Field Championships.

The 37th edition of the meet showcases the performances of 1,500 athletes from across the Prairies at the University of Manitoba's Jim Daly Fieldhouse, and Winnipeg Optimist Athletics members Jack Taylor, Josh Samyn, and Erin Valgardson will be among the competitors on the starting block.



Heading into competition, Valgardson, an 18-year-old distance runner from Kelvin High School, was hoping to finish the indoor season on a high note.

Valgardson has competed at the junior national level in both track and cross-country but said her indoor season has been less than stellar. While she has been reaching her 800 and 1,500-metre goals in practise, the Grade 12 student-athlete said that when it comes to meets, her times have been slipping. She was also hit with a cold during competition at the Simplot Games, an international meet held in Idaho at the end of February.

"I really just want to be able to push myself and get my mental game straight because I haven't had the best racing season. I really need to focus on that and keep my head focused," Valgardson said.

"It's one of the major ones in indoor season where there will be more competition, so it will be good to have a good hard race."

With coach Scott Radley, Valgardson has been working on a few strategies to get back to her personal bests of 2:14.94 in the 800 metres and 4:43.61 in the 1,500.

"It's not a smooth path all the time," Radley said. "Over the course of their career there's going to be speed bumps in their training and racing.

"We're looking at different things for her to get her over the bump," he said.

Radley said both Samyn and Taylor are aiming to notch some new personal bests at Boeing and their love for competition tends to make them stand out at meets.

"You've really got to want it. For Jack and for Josh, they will run through a wall, in terms of effort, they will run as smart as they can, to get the best times," Radley said.

Taylor, 17, said he will be chasing a personal best time in the 800 metres at Boeing — his first major indoor competition this season — with a goal of 1:56.

The Grade 12 student at St. Paul's High School was the 2017 Manitoba high school cross-country varsity boys champion and competed nationally at the Canadian Track and Field Championships last summer in Ottawa.

"I'm hoping I can just run the best I possibly can and have a good building block for outdoor," he said.

Samyn, a 17-year-old middle distance runner from Shaftesbury High School, is also gunning for a comeback after a brutal cold slowed him down at the Simplot Games. While Samyn still ran the 800 metres in Idaho, he said the race was pretty rough.

The Grade 12 student, who is on the cusp of committing to run for a school in the United States after graduation, has posted top 10 times nationally in the U20 category for the 400, 600, and 800 metre events and earlier this season ran the 800 in 1:57.97.

"I'm hoping to have a bit of a redemption and get back and do well at this one," Samyn said.

To view results from the meet, visit [boeingtrackandfield.com](http://boeingtrackandfield.com)

**Danielle Da Silva**

Reporter

Danielle Da Silva is a general assignment reporter.

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