

Worcester high jumper Joel Khan hitting new heights as he prepares for major competitions

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HIGH jumper Joel Khan continues to scale new heights as he limbers up for next month's European Under 20 Championships in Italy.



The 17-year-old from Worcester achieved a personal best of two metres 16 centimetres at the recent England Athletics Under 20 and Under 23 Championships.

Although it was not enough to clinch top spot in Bedford, the impressive leap beat his previous best by 3cm and sealed his place in the European competition in Grosseto from Thursday, July 20.

“I’m so happy with my selection,” said Khan who is ranked ninth in the UK for men’s high jump and second in the under 20 standings. “I’m happy to be completing the goals I’ve set each year and I’ve got my eyes on the world juniors next year. I want the gold and it’s a possibility as long as I continue to work hard.”

Leading up to the event Khan will get his first taste of a packed Alexander Stadium, Birmingham, when he competes at the World Championships Team Trials on Sunday. A week later the Tudor Grange Academy student will take part in the English Schools Track and Field Championships.

Worcester Athletic Club coach Deirdre Elmhirst said Khan had done “exceptionally well” to be selected for the Great Britain team in his first year as an under 20 athlete. “At the age of

just 17 years Joel is at the beginning of his journey towards being a world-class high jumper,” Elmhirst said.

“High jumpers tend to reach their peak in their mid to late 20s so he has at least another 10 years to achieve his potential. The long-term goal would be for Joel to compete at the 2024 and/or 2028 Olympic Games and he needs to be jumping about 2.30m for that. The next few years will allow Joel to gain experience competing on the international stage in U20 and then U23 championships.”

As well as working under coach Elmhirst the Worcester club star has been receiving advice from 2008 Olympic high jump finalist Tom Parsons. The 33-year-old has been chosen to be Khan’s mentor this year as part of the British Athletics Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence programme.

Elmhirst said his charge would be able to gain a “valuable insight” into what it takes to be a full-time athlete at the highest level.

“Currently Joel typically does five training sessions a week — three at the track at Nunnery Wood and two in the weights room,” Elmhirst continued. “The training sessions at the track include technical drills and high jumping as well as mobility, speed work and plyometric training to give him the spring he needs to jump high. Building strength will be a major focus over the coming years so he can be even more powerful and explosive at take-off. Joel also does general conditioning exercises and stretching at home on a daily basis. High jump is a very mental game so Joel’s training includes mental skills work to help him learn to cope with the pressure of competition and to optimise his performance. Nutrition and lifestyle are other important issues that are covered. Juggling A levels with training, family life and a part-time job requires considerable organisational skills to maintain a balanced life. Joel has the motivation and commitment to do all this hard work but still manages to have some fun.”

