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## Sportfolio

# Matson leery of Olympic politics

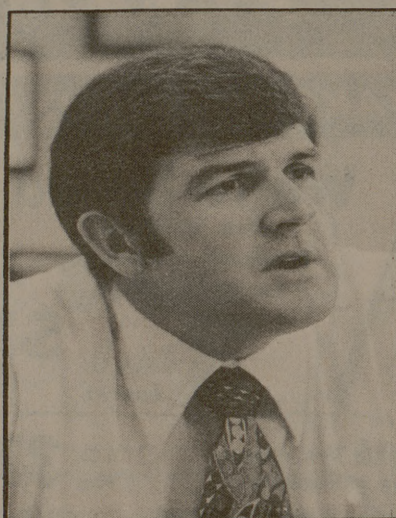
By PAUL McGRATH  
Battalion Staff Writer

One moment stands out from the others that rest upon the mantle in the office of James R. Matson, Associate Executive Director of the Texas A&M Former Students Association. It consists only of a golden metallic sphere with an accompanying plaque. Although simple in design, the trophy signifies the achievement of the ultimate in sport, for the inscription reads: 1968 Olympics, Gold Medal.

Randy Matson obtained his golden goal amidst the politically torn Mexico City Olympiad where Tommie Smith raced for a gold medal and then clenched his fist for Black Power. Reactions to the incident caused Matson to take an early flight back to Houston.

Not quite a decade has passed since Matson ceased his attack upon the record books, the days when his name was known in nearly every American household. As of last May, Matson will enter the shot put ring no more as a competitor after finally heeding the painful beckonings of retirement.

Yet, his name has been difficult to erase from the pages of track and field records. He held the world in the shot from 1965 until 1973 with a 70-7/4 foot toss in 1965 and a 71-5/8 foot effort in 1967. He was the first man ever to throw the 16 lb. spheroid over the 70 foot mark. He still holds the Southwest Conference record at 70-7 feet as well as the Texas A&M marks in both the shot and discus. He won both events at the SWC meet for three years running. Matson's credentials go on and



on, including a silver medal in the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo and a year's tour of duty on the Aggie basketball team.

Ironically, it was for basketball, not track, that brought most recruiters to the doorstep of the Pampa native. Ignoring those offers, he chose A&M over such top track schools as Southern Cal and UCLA.

However, the Aggies almost lost their star attraction during his sophomore year thanks to the irascible nature of then Head Football Coach Gene Stallings. Stallings, in his first year, became upset when he saw Matson working out with the discus during football practice. He did not know that Matson had an agreement with the former athletic director which enabled him to use the facilities at anytime. The altercation almost led to Matson's leaving the school.

Matson, like many Americans, has

become disillusioned with the political overtones surrounding the Olympics. "The last great Olympics were in Tokyo in 1964," Matson said, gesturing with the right hand that bears a ring with the Olympic signet of five interlocked rings. He recalled the world record exploits of the Human Bullet, Bob Hayes and a gung ho team spirit that seems lacking from the present squad.

"Training was important to athletes then," Matson said, his 6-7 frame dwarfing his office to the dimensions of the shot put ring that brought him world acclaim. "I was fortunate enough to compete in the glory days of track. I guess we were stereotypes. I came up under the old line that coaches told guys what to do. Now they have to explain what to do and why."

Matson said athletes were more competitive then, almost to the point of becoming enemies. He says today's athletes are not as intent. "Now it's all one, big happy family," he complained. "Take a guy like Dwight Stones (world record high

jumper) who doesn't know if he's in a tree or not. But these are the guys who are breaking the records."

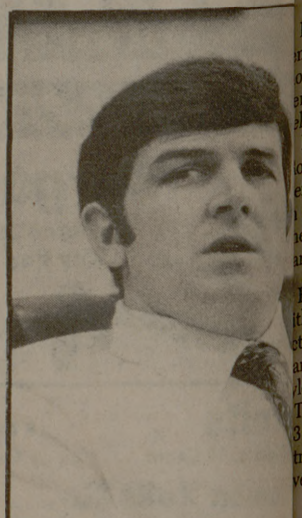
"I'm concerned about the future of the Olympics," he said, foreseeing a day when track championships may be held separately from the Games every other year. "I'm afraid Moscow (1980 Olympics) will be bad, they may be the last Olympics." He recalled several dual meets with the Russians in the middle sixties where harassment and intimidation by Russian officials made it difficult to compete effectively.

Differing methods of judging events adds more confusion to the Olympics' already state of cluttered disarray. Judges from the Iron Curtain nations tend to mark their ballots in a more favorable fashion when grading their countrymen. Matson grinned sardonically, saying, "I'm glad my judge was a tape measure."

Matson finds fault with the system now used by the United States to select its athletes for the Games. "If your goal is to have your best team at the Olympics, you prepare one way. If it's to reward the athletes who do well, then you do it another way," he said. He suggested a playoff-like system of several meets to determine those who make the Olympic journey.

"In Europe, the Olympics are the big thing. It's the Super Bowl, NBA championship and World Series all rolled into one," Matson said. "The Russians train the whole time and have sports doctors and national coaches. They receive the type of treatment that makes you want to do well. Over here, it's just trial and error."

Now 31, the articulate and personable Matson seems to have adjusted well to his status out of the limelight. Many of the 50 lbs. he gained under the guidance of A&M weight trainer Emil Malmaliga have disappeared. His main task is that of fund raising, which he indicates is much easier than competing interna-



tionally. Matson said when he goes to Aggies and their money don't have to raise it, just provide opportunity to give it.

Coming from A&M has had roots in the Matson mold. "The Aggies you're different and you're about being different. Aggie had they've gotten something else. Being somewhere else. Being an opens doors."

Somehow you get the impression that doors will never cease to open for Randy Matson.

## Former H runner head for Olymp

Readied by several weeks of work and rest from competing in the Kansas junior distance race, O'Shaughnessey starts on the road to the Montreal Olympics.

O'Shaughnessey, a 20-year-old engineering student, will represent his native Ireland in the Olympic meet Saturday at the Candada and in the Olympic field events are slated for the second week in June.

"I did nothing but speed work, mostly 220's in preparation," O'Shaughnessey said. "I am completely rested and recovered from the cold I had the first two weeks of June."

O'Shaughnessey will meet the other six members of the Olympic track team this week in the final training. He is the American's Bicentennial with workout on the Razorback's track.

He will enter the 800-meter and the 800 and 1,500-meter events in the Olympic O'Shaughnessey is the fastest in Southwest Conference after his 3:56.9 clocking in the USSTF Championships at Ks. in late May.

His best times in the events are 3:39.9 for the 1,500 and 4:46.6 for the 800. "Of course, I would like to win the Olympics," O'Shaughnessey said, "but realistically, I hope to set personal bests in the two events. Also, I am proud to be representing the Olympics this year. The overall goal is to do well in the Olympics (in Moscow)."

"I think my countryman, E. Coghlan (attending Villanova for a medal at 1,500m). Of course, we'll all probably be missing Filbert Bayi (of Tanzania) who has threatened to boycott the Games."

As the reigning SWC champion, O'Shaughnessey is forward to cross country with the Razorbacks defend their title and NCAA District titles. But for now, he'll be wearing the green of Ireland.

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