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# Freshman prepares for NCAA competition

By TED BORISKE  
Assistant Sports Editor

Although he is one of the most consistent and versatile athletes on the A&M track squad, Shifton Baker is still not satisfied with his performances this year.

The 6-0 freshman from Elgin qualified for the NCAA meet in Austin Thursday night as he turned in a 13.99 time in the 120-yard high hurdles. His performance was good enough for third behind A&M's Scottie Jones and Nate Robinson of Texas.

"At the first of the season I thought I would run a 13.8 or 13.7," said Baker. "I still think I can make it but I really haven't had a good day this year."

"I'm not that fast so I depend more on form and timing," he said. "Scottie has helped me a lot this year and now I'm at a point where I've got pretty good form and I'm getting better all the time. I know I'm a lot better than I was at the first of the year."

At the first of the year, as he was embarking on his college career, Baker had quite an impressive list of credentials built on his high school performances the year before. A prep all-American at Elgin High,

Baker had a 13.8 in the high hurdles, 37.4 in the intermediates, a high jump of 6-6, a long jump of 22-11 and was the anchor leg on Elgin's tough mile relay team.

"While I'm here at A&M, I plan to restrict myself to the hurdles," he said, "but I'll remain ready to run a mile relay leg any time I'm asked."

Thursday night, running on the mile relay team for only the second time this year, Baker was part of a foursome that turned in A&M's fastest time this year with a 3:11.3. The time qualified A&M for the NCAA meet in the mile relay, marking the second in one meet Baker was a least partly responsible for qualifying for

nationals.

"We knew Shifton was a class athlete when we recruited him," said assistant track coach Ted Nelson, "and he's running pretty much the way we expected."

With all his successes, Baker is still disappointed with his performances in the 440-yard hurdles this year, possessing a best time of 53.0.

"My intermediate hurdles times don't indicate what I'm capable of doing," said Baker. "I thought I could run under 51 seconds at the first of the year and I still think I can if I have a good day. I feel a lot better now than I have been feeling lately."

## Hacker heads SWC statistics

Jim Hacker of A&M won the 1974 Southwest Conference batting championship—with help from his glove.

Official figures released Saturday showed SWC teams set ten records in the 25 seasonal categories, set six and tied two more in 22 individual categories. The most impressive ones were A&M's .340 team batting average and the 11-0 record posted by Texas pitcher Jim Gideon, who beat every SWC foe at least once and Houston, Arkansas and SMU twice each.

Hacker hit .477, fourth highest winning percentage in Southwest Conference history, to beat out a late charge by Steve Reeves of Houston (.426) and win a season-long battle with Rick Bradley of Texas (.424).

Hacker got two hits in four trips in his final game last Saturday, but his work afield was almost as important as the 36-ounce bat he was swinging. Bradley, who had hit safely in 16 straight SWC games entering Saturday's finale against A&M, entered that game with 36 hits in 81 bats compared to Hacker's 40 for 84.

So it was still anybody's batting championship—Texas had won the

league title in Saturday's first-game victory over the Aggies—when Bradley came to bat in the first inning. He sent a wicked liner down the third-base line and apparently into left field for a double. But Hacker lunged for the ball at the last second, trapped it and nailed Bradley at first by possibly a millimeter. Bradley went out three more times in the game as Hacker became the first Aggie to win the SWC batting title since Joe Staples in 1968.

Meanwhile, Reeves was charging into the picture against Arkansas. The Cougar first baseman went 7-for-11 in the series to raise his average 54 percentage points and edge Bradley for second place.

TCU's Tommy Crain tied the homer record with ten as the conference expanded its schedule to 24 games with all nine members competing for the first time.

Crain lost a torrid duel with Bradley for the slugging championship. Both had 71 total bases, Bradley in 85 at-bats and Crain in 86. Bradley's slugging average was .835 and Crain's .826.

Although Gideon shattered the old victory record of nine shared by Texas pitchers Bobby Layne in 1946 and Luther Scarborough in 1952, this was a bitters' season. The nine SWC teams hit an aggregate .268, with Texas crowding A&M's record-setting .340 average with a .320 mark.

Four Aggies Hacker, Mike Schraeder, Paul Miller and Tommy Hawthorne, finished among the top ten hitters. Last year's champion, Keith Moreland of Texas, fell from his freshman mark of .405 to eleventh at .374, while '73 runner-up David Vinson of Houston finished 39th at .286.



Shifton Baker

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