Woods to highlight basketball competition

National Sports Festival opens today

United Press International

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. For years and years Robert J. has told anyone who would listen that what the United States Olympic program needed was a summertime competition including the best amateur athletes a nation could produce.

Today, Kane's dream will become reality.

"It is a tremendous feeling," said the president of the USOC, "to know that the day has finally arrived.

"The people involved in this event have done a better job of getting it off the ground than I thought they could."

The first National Sports Festival officially opened Wednesday night with a civic ceremony in a public park. And the four-day competition began this morning in 25 Olympic sports.

Kane has been president of the USOC 16 months and the first thing he did when he took office was to announce his plans for the festival. The idea was met with general indifference and a good deal of pessimism.

But Kane persisted and slowly the governing bodies of the Olympic sports began to fall in line. The festival has grown to 2,100 athletes, the largest such national gathering in the history of the country.

With only 10 months planning, the event has gotten off the drawing board and some members of the USOC even go so far as to say that in a decade the mini-Olympics will become bigger than the Super Bowl.

There is also a chance it could flop and Kane is admittedly itchy over the outcome of his inaugural effort. "I guess you could say I feel a certain amount of trepidation," Kane said Wednesday. "I naturally feel responsible for all this because I have been so insistent that we try it.

"I will be greatly relieved when our first effort is completed.

"But deep down I know this will be a success. The people who have worked have done everything they could. We have a marvelous group of athletes."

Some of the sports — swimming in particular — could not bring top competitors because of conflicts in scheduling. Kane hopes those conflicts will be eliminated in future years.

The thing the festival could use the most — live television coverage — is also missing.

One network will show two hours of taped highlights a week after the festival is completed.

"I was disappointed we could not get television this year," Kane said. "But we did everything on such short notice that we could not work it out. I think they wanted to see what this was all about first and they also program so far in advance, it was hard to get such coverage.

"We have already had talks with television people for next year and I am greatly encouraged about the prospects for live television for 1979."

Most of the competition that will catch the public eye will come in the same sports that creates most of the interest in Olympic years — track and field, basketball and boxing.

Sprinter Harvey Glance heads the list of track stars who will begin competition Friday. Six national AAU champions will be boxing and the basketball tournament featuring four teams will have the very best of incoming college freshmen.

One of the highlights of the festival could come Saturday night when the South basketball team meets the squad from the East. The centers for those two teams will be 6-11 high school senior Earl Jones from Mount Hope, W.V., and 6-11 Rudy Woods who will enroll at Texas A&M this year.

Scouts already feel those two youngsters could stage some memorable battles when they reach the pro level in the early 1980s.

The National Sports Festival will be held every year except on Olympic years.

Oilers expect better punting

United Press International

SAN ANGELO — There have been numerous football seasons that the Houston Oilers did not have a good punter. And at times when they did employ a quality kicker, as they have since pointed out, they didn't know it.

Examples of active pro punters the Oilers acquired and then discarded were Roy Gerela, Mark Moseley, Spike Jones and David Overly.

That poor record probably will continue this season because the two punters who are in the Oilers training camp competing for one job are proven performers. They are 5-year veteran Jerrel Wilson, who was acquired from Kansas City in the off-season, and two-year pro Cliff Parsley.

Oilers head coach Bum Phillips said both have been booming punts in six practice sessions so far.

"We'll let each of them punt half a game for the four (preseason) games," Phillips said. "Then we'll make a decision, if we haven't already done it."

The most prominent factor, if the punting is fairly equal, would appear to be the ages of the two punters. Wilson is 36 and Parsley is 23.

Phillips said he will not consider that factor.

Special teams coach John Paul Young, former linebacker coach at Texas A&M University, said he was watching the competition with a set point of view.

"Cliff is our punter today. He'll have to be beaten out," Young said.

Last season Parsley, a Grandview, Mo., native who led the Big Eight in punting three times while at Oklahoma State, punted for a 39.4-yard average in his rookie season with the Oilers.

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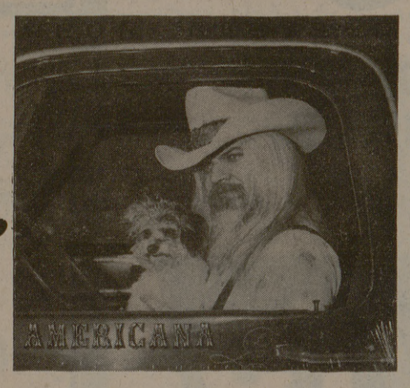

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