

Former All-America Mel Nash

# New swim coach talks about Ag future

By JOHN BRASHER  
Sports Reporter

Becoming the head swim coach at Texas A&M was a dream come true for Mel Nash who accepted the position last summer.

"Getting the job was the greatest stroke of luck in my life and I couldn't be any happier now," Nash said. "I never expected such a great opportunity so soon in my life."

An opportunity is exactly what Nash, 25-year-old, will get at A&M as he tries to turn Aggieland into a swimming power.

Nash said, "The Southwest Conference is coming up very rapidly in swimming and A&M is a good place to build a team. A&M's located in a good town, has excellent academics, it's a good-size university and has athletic support."

Nash, from Monroeville, Pa., could almost write a book on swimming and diving. It's been his life since he was eight years old.

As a full-time swimmer at 15, he went to the National Junior Olympics and won the 100-meter backstroke and finished second in the 100-meter butterfly.

While in high school, Nash won the Pennsylvania state champion-

ship in the 100-yard backstroke during his sophomore, junior and senior years. He also holds the Pennsylvania state record in the 200-meter individual medley with a time of 1:55.8.

During the same three years, Nash was named the Western Pennsylvania Swimmer of the Year, an honor which had not been awarded to a sophomore during its 44-year existence.

In 1971, he won the National AAU Championship and went on to win the 100-meter backstroke in the Pan American Games at Cali, Colombia.

Two prestigious honors were awarded to Nash his senior year in high school. In 1972, Swimming World Magazine named him the No. 1 high school swimmer in the nation and another magazine awarded him Pennsylvania's High School Athlete of the Year.

Nash enrolled at Indiana University, which was the No. 1 swimming school in the country, and established himself as one of the top swimmers in the nation.

It was here where he became a member of the World Aquatic Championship Swim Team in 1973 and 1975.

Nash was also a member of the 400-meter freestyle relay team which won the world championship at Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1973. Two years later, he won the bronze medal in the 100-meter backstroke at Cali, Colombia.

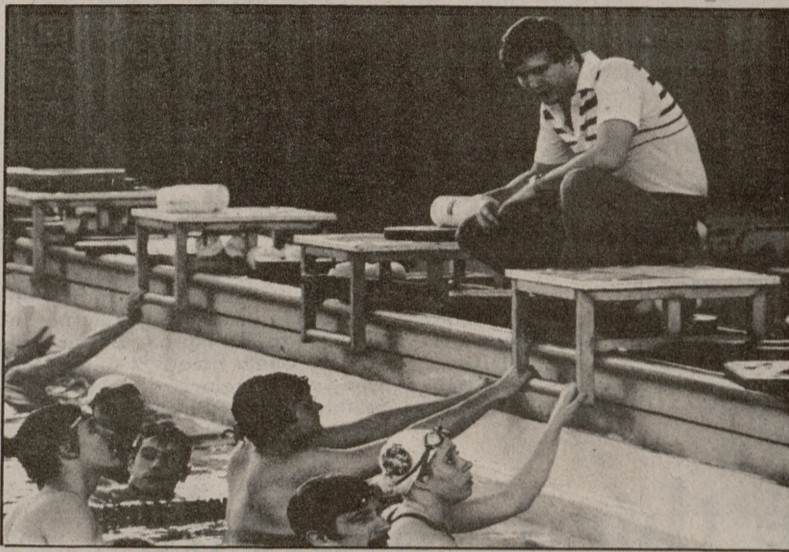
Nash was the Big Ten Champion eight times, NCAA All-American 15 times, and swam competitively against such popular swimmers as Mark Spitz and John Naber.

Did he ever make it to the Olympics? Nash slowly leaned back in his office chair, laughed and said, "You hit the sore spot. In 1972, I needed to finish in eighth place to make the U.S. Olympic team and I finished ninth."

In 1976, Nash was still determined to make the team, but once again his life-long dream turned into a nightmare when he failed to qualify by sixteen-hundredths of a point.

"I think that experience will help me in my coaching career," Nash said, "because that was a goal that was with me since I was a child and I didn't achieve it. Now as a coach, I want to help as many people get there as I can."

The key to his success as a swimmer was the combination of competi-



Mel Nash, Texas A&M swimming coach and former All-America, gives instructions to his charges during a recent workout.

Photo by Lisa Martin

drive and talent. He stated, "I had a God-given talent and the competitive drive was instilled in me by

my father." After graduating from Indiana with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in

speech communications, Nash remained at his alma mater for a year as an assistant coach. In 1977 and only 22 years old, he became the swimming coach at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), making him the youngest head coach at a major university in NCAA history.

Before Nash arrived at UTA, the team only had one swimmer previously make it to the NCAA Championships. But it didn't take Nash long to turn the program around. "At the end of my first year at UTA, I took three people to the National Championships and also recruited six high school and junior college All-Americans. During my second and final year there, I took five people to the NCAA Championships and had one All-American."

Lack of funds forced UTA to cancel its swimming program in the spring of 1979 and Nash admitted he wasn't too sure what he was going to do. "I had heard a lot of good things about A&M so I did a little research on it and when I was asked if I would accept the job, I very gladly said yes."

The urge to coach has always been there, Nash stated, but he shied away from it in his early college years

because he was told a person couldn't make money coaching. "I saw that the best coaches made big dollars so I went into the profession with the attitude of being the best."

what you enjoy no matter what is offered. "I was offered many public relation jobs and could have a lot of money but I never would have been happy. By coaching swimming, I'm never bored, I enjoy it, I'm interested in it and I'm glad with it."

As a coach, Nash is fairly strict, expects things to be done their way and doesn't stand for breaking the rules and then apologizing.

"College is not four years of time. Athletes are getting tired and need to sacrifice. They have responsibility to their school and athletic department."

Nash believes that getting into sport for fun and not for the competitive aspect is wrong. "I'm not thirsty but if you get your best and still finish last, how good do you really feel? You're still going to be dissatisfied, so you have to be competitive."

## Track team led by Olympic hopefuls

By STEVE SISNEY  
Sports Staff

Lead by seven Olympic hopefuls, the Texas A&M track team is off to an early start in the 1980 indoor track season which will climax Feb. 15 at the Southwest Conference Championship in Fort Worth.

National qualifiers will head to Detroit, Michigan, for the NCAA Championships to be held March 14-15.

Aggie thinclads who have thus far qualified for the national meet are Curtis Dickey in the 60 yard dash,

Mike Gaspie in the 60 yard high hurdles, Leslie Kerr in the 440 yard dash, Randy Hall in the pole vault, and Jim Howard in the high jump.

These five, along with quartermilers Steve Willis and Vernon Pittman, all hold an excellent chance of being able to compete at the U.S. Olympic Trials in Eugene, Oregon June 21-29.

"We have a good team this year," believes Head Track Coach Charlie Thomas. "We hope to win the Southwest Conference Championship but we don't have any really good dis-

tance runners," he admits.

Indoor meets are geared around middle-distance races, an area in which the Aggies are severely lacking after losing three half-milers to graduation last spring.

Thomas predicts a third or fourth place finish for the Aggie tracksters. Houston, Texas, and Arkansas will be the main contenders for the SWC crown.

A&M figures to be able to score high in the field events, sprints, hurdles, and relays, events where they have traditionally been strong.

Both Thomas and Assistant Head Coach Ted Nelson agree that, "We have several extremely good athletes, but we don't have a lot of depth."

Heading the Aggie speedsters will be Dickey, a world-class sprinter and anchor-man of the 400 meter sprint relay team.

Joining Dickey on the sprint relay team, which captured first at last year's conference meet, will be Willis, Kerr, and possibly either Pittman or Mike Mosley.

Mosley's track future is uncertain

at this time due to conflicts with his football schedule. At the conference meet last season, he was able to place in both the long jump and 110 meter hurdles.

Kerr, Willis, and Pittman should be the toughest trio in the conference in the 400 meters as Kerr and Willis finished one-two in the conference last year, and Pittman is predicted to have a strong season.

All three are members of the 1,600 meter relay team that finished third in the conference last year and are together again this year on the team that ranks as favorite.

Expected high point scorers in the field events will be the experienced Randy Hall, Tim Scott, and James Howard.

Hall, the current SWC outdoor pole vault champion, has already made a strong showing this season.

Scott, the premier weightman for the Aggies, is a favorite in the discus at any meet he attends. He picked up points in both the shot put and discus at the conference meet last year.

Howard, the returning high jump

champ, will be out for the next six weeks following an ankle injury a meet last weekend. Other standing Aggie high jumpers are Chuck Perry and Mike Gaspie.

Freshmen football standout Tony Hector shows promise in the jump, and Mike Newsom shows the Ag's best javelin thrower.

Things look bleak for Texas in the 10,000 meter run, triple jump and steeplechase, three events recently added to the SWC slate. cause, according to Coach Thomas, "We just don't have any one in these events yet."

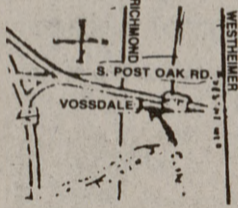
He added, "Because of the scholarship limit imposed by NCAA, you can't be strong everywhere. You just have to go with what you have."

The Aggies have two more meets before the championship at Ft. Worth. The outdoor season begins February 23 at Rice University.

At last year's SWC outdoor and field championship, Texas took second with 96 points behind the University of Texas who finished with 110. The University of Houston placed third.

### FREE PREGNANCY TESTS

- Immediate Appointments
- Confidential Counseling
- Birth Control Information
- Termination of Pregnancy



**WEST LOOP CLINIC**  
**622-2170**  
2909 WEST LOOP SOUTH  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77027

**TIRED OF WORKING YOUR WAY THROUGH COLLEGE? WOULD YOU LIKE TO EARN UP TO \$8500 IN YOUR LAST 12 MONTHS OF COLLEGE?**

### JUNIORS SENIORS GRADS

If you have calculus through integrals and one year of physics, you may qualify to earn over \$8500 for your last 12 months in college plus a year of training in the nuclear power field. Contact the Nuclear Programs Manager at (713) 224-1756 collect or write to:

**NUCLEAR PROGRAMS MANAGER**  
Melrose Bldg., 9th floor  
1121 Walker St.  
Houston, Texas 77002

U.S. Citizens Only Equal Opportunity Employer

### DISCOVER THE DIFFERENCE.



**TAKE A DISCOVERY FLIGHT ... ONLY \$10.00.**

When you take over the controls of an airplane and fly it, you'll discover a great big difference in your life. Everything will look different and you'll feel different, too. If you'd like to do something that everyone else isn't doing, take our Discovery Flight. It'll only cost you \$10.00 and you'll actually fly an airplane under the guidance of a professional Cessna Pilot Center Flight Instructor.

And ask the folks at Brazos Aviation about receiving college credit for completion of their course.



**NOW'S THE TIME TO DO IT!**  
**BRAZOS AVIATION**  
Easterwood Airport  
696-8767

3709 E. 29TH (TOWN & COUNTRY CENTER)

PIPES  
SNUFF  
SPITONS  
PIPE RACKS  
ROLLING PAPER  
CIGARS - IMPORTED AND DOMESTIC  
LIGHTERS/FLUID  
IMPORTED CIGARETTES  
CUSTOM BLENDED TOBACCO  
CANDLES THAT KILL TOBACCO ODOR

**SARITAS SMOKE SHOP**

**FORT SHILOH STEAK HOUSE**

A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE IN GOOD FOOD, FUN AND FRIENDS.  
2528 S. Texas College Station

**The Longest Happy Hour in Town**  
(3 till 7)

Drinks two for the price of one  
Ladies bring this coupon good for one free drink

courtesy of

**The Ultimate Disco Extravaganza**



Across from Campus in Skaggs Shopping Center

**Peace Lutheran Church**

Meets weekly in the A&M Consolidated School Cafeteria. (Enter off Welch Street)

STUDY 9:30  
WORSHIP 10:45

Stan Sultemeier  
693-1047

A fellowship of believers that strives to bring people into touch with one another, themselves and God.

**AXA**

WANTED: BROTHERS

Were looking for brothers, not just acquaintances; not just a gang to party with, but a group to which you'll have strong ties and from which lifetime friendships will grow.

Lambda Chi Alpha... honest friendship

Jim Hepburn - President, 696-0013  
Steve Fant - Treasurer, 693-3961

**"TECHNOLOGY: TOOL OR TYRANT?"**

Selection for A&M delegates to the  
**M** Conference held on Feb. 13th to 16th begins  
**S** On Mon. January 28th thru Feb. 1st  
**C** Now accepting applications for interviews  
**A** At Rm. 221 MSC; Directors Office

BE ONE OF 25 TEXAS A&M STUDENTS WHO WILL JOIN OVER 150 STUDENTS FROM ACROSS NORTH AMERICA IN DISCUSSING THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN OUR SOCIETY.

**march of dimes month**

**Tupinambo**  
Eddie Dominguez  
Joe Aracinega

**POP those who demand the Real Thing!**

If you want the real thing, not frozen or canned... We call it "Mexican Food Supreme."

Dallas location:  
3071 Northwest Hwy  
352-8570