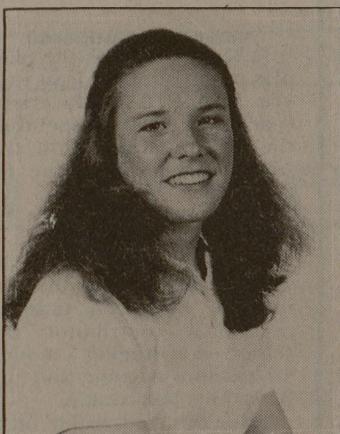


Quiet success

Consistent improvement pushing Suzanne Sheffield to top

by Scott Griffin

Battalion Staff
Quiet consistency — the best way to describe Suzanne Sheffield.



Suzanne Sheffield

As a member of the Texas A&M women's track team, Sheffield has qualified for the NCAA National Outdoor Meet two years in a row. But from her own quiet demeanor, you'd never know it.

Maybe that's because her road to success wasn't exactly lined with roses.

When she was younger, she wanted to go into gymnastics, but a vaulting accident put an end to her gymnastics career.

So Sheffield turned to track. After a successful stint at Plano High School in which she placed third in the state in the 800-meter run her junior and senior years, Sheffield was recruited by three Southwest Conference schools: Arkansas, Texas, and Texas A&M.

All three schools offered her scholarships, but Sheffield said she chose Texas A&M because, "I like the coach, students, and the campus."

Eventually, though, things

began to change. With the encouragement of coaches, Sheffield continued work and improved considerably during her sophomore year. She consistently lowered her times and placed fourth or fifth in several meets.

But the main highlight, by far, was when she qualified for nationals last year as a sophomore in the 1500-meter run at the College Station Relays.

Women's coach Bill Nix attributed Sheffield's improvement to a program of patience. "Suzanne was disappointed, at first, because she didn't understand our system," he said. "The system is one that gives runners time to develop, and it takes patience and diligence."

Nix says his program doesn't churn out national champions overnight, but develops national caliber athletes who peak in their later years.

Obviously, Sheffield is climbing that peak. She again qualified for nationals this past weekend at the Texas Relays in Austin, but said she isn't satisfied yet.

"Even though the 1500 is fun, the 800 is my favorite," Sheffield is referring to the 800 meters, and her time of 2:08.1 is only one-tenth of a second away from the national qualifying time of 2:08.0.

One would think that with all she's accomplished this year, Sheffield herself might even be impressed, but she merely replies: "I'd say my running has been a little more consistent this year."

Sheffield is quick to point out that she didn't accomplish it all on her own: "The main reason I came to A&M is because of Coach Nix. He knows how to train runners."

Sheffield says another factor in her consistency is that the competition has been tough this year. Disa Lewis of Rice and Tara Arnold from the University of Texas have been her main rivals this season, especially Arnold.

During the finals of the 1500-meter run this weekend, Arnold was ahead of the pack, including Sheffield, with only 100 meters to go.

And after being consistently beaten by Arnold for the past two years, Sheffield decided it was time to reciprocate: "The race was run at a fast pace, and near the end, Arnold just took off from everyone else — but I followed her. With about 100 meters to go, I said, 'I want to beat her this time,' so I just did it."

She did it, all right — and in an impressive manner. Her time of 4:18.8 beat the national qualifying time by four seconds and bettered her 4:28.0 personal best by 10 seconds.

She is consistent.

As far as her future is concerned, Sheffield says she wants to win some SWC titles and hopefully some national honors. Not a remote possibility, since Nix says that they are just now beginning to tap Sheffield's potential.

As for Sheffield making an Olympic team, Nix says, "It's a definite possibility."

"Right now, that's in the back of my mind," Sheffield says, "but I have always wanted to go to the Olympics."

Pennie Hall chooses Tech

United Press International
RUSTON, La. — Southern California defeated Louisiana Tech recently for the NCAA women's basketball championship, but the Lady Techsters scored a recruiting victory Wednesday over the Women of Troy.

Hall scored 3,587 points — a 26.2 average — and had 875 assists in her high school career. Her team won the state Class AAA title the past two years. Hall was a three-time all-state basketball selection and this year was named Class AAA most valuable player.

Hall will be groomed to take the place of Tech point guard Kim Mulkey, who graduates next year, said Kent Prince, Tech sports information director. She also may fill the shoes of White, who often rotated with Mulkey as point guard.

SA boxer Ayala convicted in rape case

United Press International
PATERSON, N.J. — Boxer Tony Ayala Jr. faces 50 years in prison following his conviction for the rape of a West Paterson woman.

After deliberating for 3½ hours Wednesday, the jury of 12 women and seven men found Ayala, 20, guilty of aggravated sexual assault, threatening to kill, making terroristic threats, burglary and two counts of unlawful possession of a knife.

Ayala, of San Antonio, faces up to an additional 10 years in prison in Texas because the conviction violates his parole in San

Antonio. He had pleaded guilty to aggravated assault charges in 1978 in San Antonio and paid \$20,000 to the victim's family in exchange for being placed on 10 years' probation.

Bergen County District Attorney Sam Millsap said he will move to have Ayala's probation revoked and a 10-year prison term restored. Both the New Jersey woman and her roommate have agreed to testify against Ayala in Texas.

Ayala, an undefeated junior middleweight contender, stood expressionless as the verdict was delivered in the packed courtroom. He glared at the victim as

he was led from the courtroom.

Ayala's common-law wife, Lisa Ayala, and the defendant's mother, Pauline, held each other and sobbed as the jury foreman returned the six guilty counts.

"We are delighted with the verdict," said the father of the rape victim, identified only as a 30-year-old former math

teacher. "I'm the father. What else can I say?"

Ayala, who testified in his own defense during the 2½-week trial, claimed he was framed by overzealous police and a vengeful woman. He testified the woman invited him to have sex with her but later became angry.

The prosecution contended

that Ayala forced his way into the home and terrorized two defenseless victims.

Defense attorney William DeMarco was expected to appeal the conviction, but said Ayala, a top fighter with a 22-0 record, including 19 knockouts, was "in no condition to discuss an appeal."

Aggieland yearbook

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