

Aggie gold medalist identifies with Lewis

By TRAVIS TINGLE
Sports Editor

One word could have described the feelings of United States sprinter Carl Lewis before the start of the Los Angeles Olympics — pressure.

But the pressure surrounding the Olympics today is no different than it was 16 years ago. No one knows that more than Randy Matson — Texas A&M's only Olympic gold medalist.

Matson, the executive director of the Association of Former Students, took gold medal honors in the shot put during the 1968 Mexico City Games.

"One of the toughest things I've ever been through was going in as a gold medal favorite in the Olympics," Matson says.

Matson knows what's going on inside Lewis and Moses — he's been there before.

"I feel empathy for those guys (Lewis and U.S. hurdler Edwin Moses). I felt like after all the years of training I'd been through to win the gold, I was ready to turn somersaults when I got done. I was just glad it was over."

Matson, a freshman on the Texas A&M track and field team in 1964, won a silver medal in the shot put during that year's Tokyo Games. It

was that performance that made him a strong candidate for the gold in the '68 Mexico City Games.

But Matson says being heavily favored to win a gold medal doesn't necessarily make an athlete overconfident.

"It's just opposite of that," he says. "You try much harder. You're aware of being heavily favored to win so you just try to keep from losing rather than going all out to win. If you're expected to win the gold, there's a lot of pressure on you to excel."

Excel is putting it lightly for most American sports fans. Not only are Olympians expected to win gold medals, but they must break and set world records in the process.

Carl Lewis found this to be the case Monday night. He heard boos from the L.A. Coliseum crowd after he failed to even try to break American Bob Beamon's world record long jump by passing on his last four attempts.

But Matson knows how difficult it is to shatter world records.

"It's hard to break world records in the Olympics," he says. "Technique events are the hardest to set records in. I used to compete against the tape measure when I threw the shot, but those records never came any easier."

"I won the gold in '68 with a throw of 67 1/4 feet. That wasn't my best mark, but I threw early and everybody else got worse as it went along."

The U.S. Olympic team felt an even greater pressure to win gold medals after the Soviet Union announced it would boycott the Games. Even Matson admits he's sorry that the Soviet and East German athletes weren't able to compete in Los Angeles. He says the competition level just isn't the same without them.

"It's like taking Texas and SMU out of the Southwest Conference football race," he says. "It just wouldn't be the same."

After Matson accomplished his lifelong goal of winning an Olympic gold medal, he still put more pressure on himself. In July 1972, Matson placed fourth in the Olympic trials, but only the top three finishers made the U.S. team.

Matson's reason for trying to make the Olympic team again after reaching the peak of his career by winning an gold is simple — a competitive drive.

"I felt like I had to go back one more time, even after I'd won the gold," he says. "I thought the experience of being on two previous Olympic teams would give me as good a shot to win as anybody."

'84 Olympic feats show proof

Women steal Games

United Press International

LOS ANGELES — This is the Olympics of the American woman.

After decades of also rans, second-rate facilities and subtle discrimination, American women at the Los Angeles Olympics have used the East Bloc boycott and their own gutsy determination to steal the show.

Runner Valerie Brisco-Hooks bore a child and shed 40 pounds before winning the gold in the 400 meters. Marathoner Joan Benoit, only months after knee surgery, kept her world record at the end of a 26-mile course she called a breeze. And a 16-year-old from West Virginia, Mary Lou Retton, gave the United States its first women's gymnastics medal — a gold.

Twelve new Olympic events and one sport — cycling — were opened to women at the Los Angeles Games and from them, came some of the new American "heroines" that will doubtless be cast as role models for a younger generation.

"Now women really train, and train very hard," Prof. Christine Wells told the Olympic Scientific Congress in Eugene, Ore. "And

they're training much more similarly to the way men train. And we're seeing the differences."

Credited with many of the gains American women athletes have made is Title 9, a federal law requiring all schools receiving government aid to provide women with the same educational opportunities as men.

Although a recent Supreme Court decision narrowed its definition, regulations that took effect in 1976 stipulate that elementary and high schools receiving federal dollars must ensure girls and boys have an equal chance to excel in sports. The same regulation was enacted at federally-financed American colleges and universities two years later.

"Title 9 has made a tremendous difference in opening up athletics to girls in high school," said attorney Margaret Kohn of the National Women's Law Center in Washington, D.C. "Before Title 9, there were no athletic scholarships for women. Now there are over 10,000 athletic scholarships for women in the U.S."

"And we see what happened at the (Los Angeles) Olympics." Yet in the face of the good news for American women athletes comes

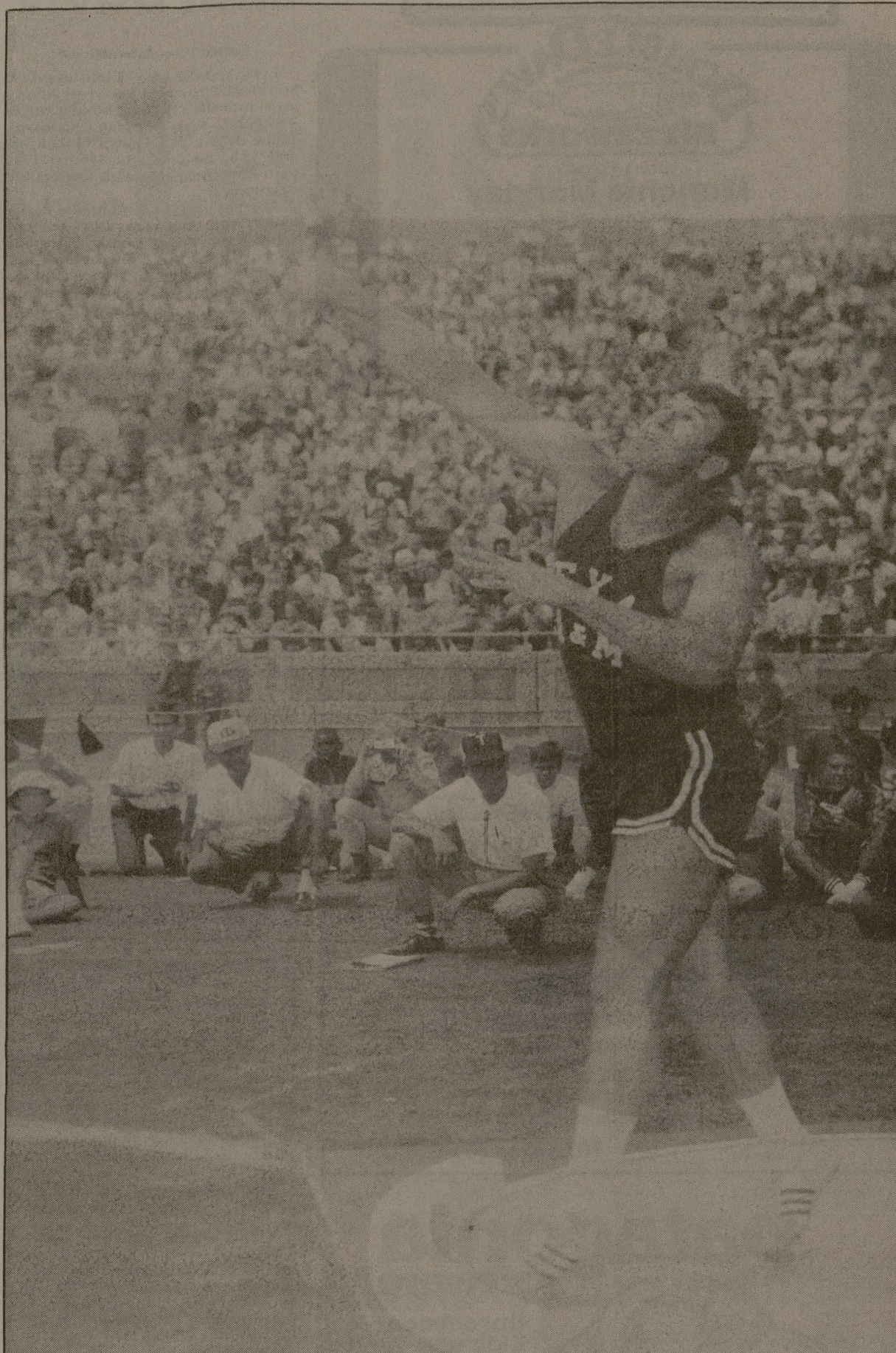
less heartening statistics, mostly from the Third World. Of the 140 countries participating in the 23rd Olympics, 50 of them included no women athletes, while another 48 had no more than five.

Games' organizers had expected about 30 percent of the participants to be women, but the East Bloc boycott dropped that to only 21 percent — the same as the 1976 Olympics in Montreal.

Switzerland's Gabrielle Andersen-Schiess, 39, staggered across the marathon finish line suffering from heat prostration and was widely congratulated for toughing it out.

Tracy Caulkins, 21, who won two individual gold medals during the week-long swimming competition, retired in Los Angeles with 48 individual national titles as compared to previous record holder Johnny Weissmuller's 38.

"This has been a great Olympics for women," Caulkins said. "You saw what Joan (Benoit) did and we have Mary Lou Retton and (middle distance runner) Mary Decker. I think we can all be role models for young athletes and help them compete."



Randy Matson, Texas A&M's only Olympic gold medalist, is shown here throwing the

shot put during his days on the Aggie track and field team from 1964-1968.

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