

SPORTS

Coaches say A&M on right 'track' for '85 season



Photo by DEAN SAITO

Members of the Texas A&M women's track team get in their laps around Kyle Field in preparation for the Paper Tiger Relays this weekend in Baton Rouge, La. The meet, hosted by

LSU, will be the team's third of the young outdoor season. A&M's men's track and field team also sees action this weekend, competing in the Texas Southern Relays in Houston.

By CINDY GAY
Sports Writer

As the Texas A&M men's and women's track teams take their marks for the start of the outdoor season, both coaches are convinced their teams are on the right track in '85.

The A&M women will compete in the Paper Tiger Relays at Louisiana State University this weekend, while the men opted for the Texas Southern Relays in Houston, instead of their originally scheduled trip to Baton Rouge.

"(The TSU Relays) are more suited to us," said A&M Men's Coach Charlie Thomas because his team excels in the carnival relay events.

A&M will pass the baton in the sprint medley, distance medley, mile and shuttle hurdle relays in their first appearance at the TSU Relays.

Rod Richardson, Tony Grier, Maurice Holt and Kendrick Wesley will all double in both the sprint medley and mile relays, while the shuttle hurdle relay team includes Todd Howard, Lorenzo Welborn, Harry Johnson and Rickey Alexander.

Anchoring the distance medley relay is Arturo Barrios, who has a promising chance to win first place in the 1,500-meters.

The Aggie men will take to the field with Ethan Class and Ernie Mendez both hoping to "place high" in the high jump. Francisco Olvidares is a triple-jump favorite to win, and Desmond Kidd, Mark Bruce and Mark Rutledge should place in the pole vault.

A&M Women's Coach Bill Nix said he is inserting his 15 runners in the Paper Tiger Relays' 30-team field with no idea of what to expect.

"We're just going into it with the attitude that we want to improve," Nix said.

Nix said he keeps a small quality team of half distance runners and half sprinters and hurdlers. A couple of women have already found a place in Aggie track history at two earlier meets this season.

Judy Williams owns A&M's second fastest 400-meter time at 55.48 seconds, while teammate Esther Dedrick holds the No. 5 spot in the 1500-meter at four minutes, 42 seconds. Four Aggies have also set personal bests so far this season —

Debbly Noel, Terry Barber, and freshman twins Beth and Beth Dreyes.

Because of his four freshmen's experience, Nix said he's ready for surprises whenever they round the track.

Another unique aspect of the year's women's team is its first pair of walk-ons, the Dreye sisters.

In contrast, the 70-member Aggie men's team confronts a different set of uncertainties this season.

"Every week it changes," said Thomas about his roster of available and healthy runners for each meet. "It's not a set team."

Six A&M football players are sitting aside their helmets between spring training sessions to work on track and field events. Thomas said the players will perform vital roles at the Southwest Conference Championship Meet in May.

"The Southwest Conference is the strongest track conference in the United States," Thomas said.

Arkansas, Baylor and SMU dominated the indoor nationals in March by finishing first, third and fifth respectively, while the Aggies claimed 22nd place overall.

"We have five or six (runners) capable of scoring at the (outdoor) nationals," Thomas said. "I think we can compete with everybody but Arkansas."

So what makes the Razorbacks so formidable? Thomas said the Aggies have tipped the SWC track scales by recruiting athletes from England and Ireland. SMU draws runners from Scandinavian countries, while Texas keeps its eyes on track hopefuls from Jamaica, Kenya and Ireland.

"They (other SWC schools) sort of have a pipeline," Thomas said. "We never have actively recruited foreign runners."

A&M's only foreign runners are from Mexico, and both Barrios and Olvidares are predicted to finish well this weekend.

Nix said he has never actively sought foreign athletes for the Aggie women's program.

"There are many American guys that need to have that (scholarship) money," Nix said, "and they can't just as good."

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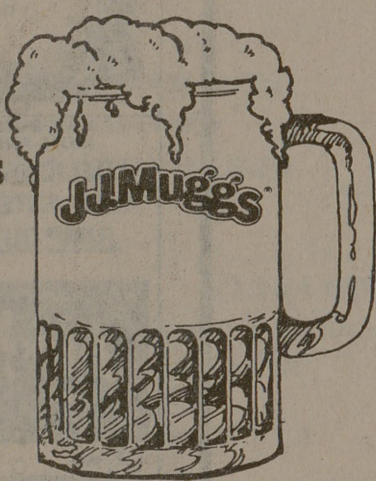
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