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## A&M back on track — and field

Teams open season today in Louisiana

> **By TOM TAGLIABUE** Sports Writer

The Texas A&M men's and wom-en's track and field teams will com-pete in their first indoor meet of 1986 today and Saturday in Baton Rouge, La. at the LSU Invitational. A&M Head Track Coach Charlie Thomas said the Aggies will use the meet to get back in shape and give the athletes competition before the more major meets.

Thomas, who took over as head coach in June, said some NCAA schools have already been to two or three meets, while the LSU meet will be A&M's first. The Aggies sent 95 athletes to compete in Louisiana. Going into the '86 season, Thomas mid the streamths of both

Thomas said the strengths of both the men's and women's teams lie in the field events.

"We may have a pretty well-rounded track team this year," Thomas said. "The field events are where we'll probably be the strong-

Thomas rates the Southwest Conference as the top track and field conference in the nation for '86.

The Aggie men's team has some big holes to fill after last season's fifth-place SWC finish.

A&M loses both of its top high jumpers, Jimmy Howard and Ethan Glass, as well as All-America and NCAA champion distance runner Arturo Barrios.

One of the new freshman recruits Thomas thinks will make an imme-diate impact is 6-foot-4, 280-pound shot put and discus specialist, Randy Barnes. Barnes has thrown the shot 64 foot in proving The top shot put 64 feet in practice. The top shot put-ter in the SWC last season won with a throw of only 62 feet.

Thomas expects good things from freshman mile runner Calvin Ga-ziano, from California, and Ian James, a triple and long jumper, who was the Canadian national track champion in 1083

who was the Canadian national track champion in 1983. Thomas said he also expects im-mediate contributions from his freshman relay team — Floyd Heard, from Milwaukee, Wis.; Stan-ley Kerr, a high school All-American from near-by Snook; Lawrence Fe-hon a state champion hurdler from hon, a state champion hurdler from Convent, La.; and Archie Roberts from Houston. Heard and Kerr will also run the 100- and 200-yard dashes.

"We have an outstanding group of freshmen and we feel like by the time the year is over, some of these freshmen will be making pretty good news for us — we hope," Thomas said.

"We feel like that, by the end of the year, the freshmen will be matured and will be acting like they've been here four years. We like to think they've got the ability. And in track, if you've got the ability, you can (win) your freshman year. You A&M's Kendrick Wesley (left) snags the baton from teammate Floyd Heard (right) during work-

Sixty-nine men will make the trip to LSU, including Kendrick Wesley, who runs the half-mile and mile re-lay; Chris Walker, a sophomore high jumper who placed third in the SWC meet last year; Francisco Oliveras, a senior All-America triple jumper from Mexico; and sophomore Rickey Alexander, a high hurdler.

The men's team will be without high jumper Kenny Burke, who has a sprained ankle. This leaves the team without a high jumper because the Aggies lost their other high jumper to academic problems.

The Aggie women's program is two-year layoff.

outs in preparation for the LSU Invitational in-door track and field meet today and Saturday.

The women's team consists of only 26 members, but Thomas said he is confident the veterans can do well at this weekend's meet and bevond.

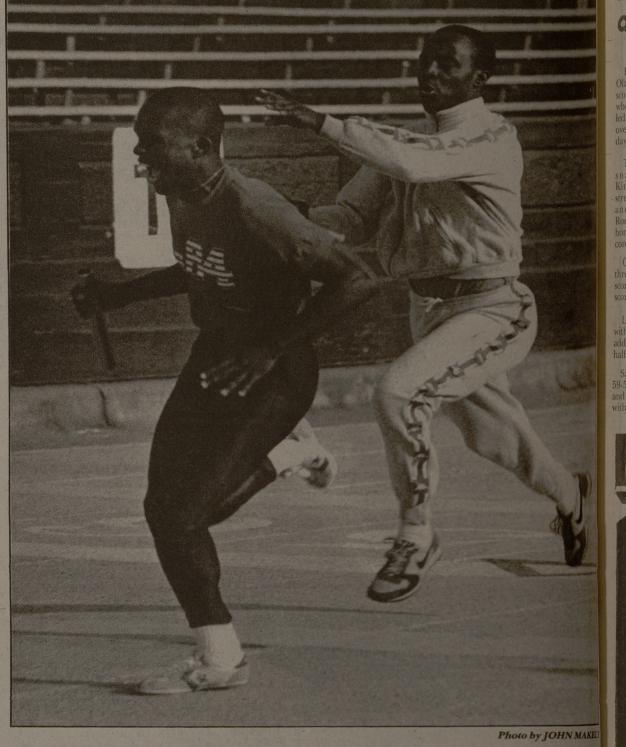
Distance running is the event which Thomas expects the women to excel in '86.

Four women make up the dis-tance team for the Aggies — sopho-mores Becky and Beth Drees, twins ers. from Fort Wayne, Ind.; senior Debbie Noel, of Richardson; and senior Kathy Craig, a walk-on who re-turned to the team last year after a

points for the women, too, Thor

Lisa Coley, a junior college az fer from Mesa, Ariz., will throw javelin for the Aggies. Thomas is Kay McMurray, a Bryan High pro uct who throws both the shot a discussion of the shot a discus, as a potential force in SWC. He also said Cassandra kins and Vernell Dunn, both putters, are possible point prod

Thomas, who is coaching women's team for the first time, a said Sherri Smith (hurdles), Bran Stubblefield (high jump) and L'Inya Brown (long jump) have look



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don't have to wait."

because of a lack of team members.

Field events should bring in some good in practice.

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