

Track and Field warming up for new season, conference

BY JEREMY FURTTICK
THE BATTALION

New conference, new competition, new era, new faces, but the same success. This is the battle cry of the Texas A&M Men's and Women's Track and Field teams as the Aggies head into its inaugural Big 12 season.

Both the men's and the women's teams finished second in the final Southwest Conference Championships and went on to compete in the NCAA Outdoor Championships in Eugene, Ore. The men tied for 19th while the women tied for 25th in the Championships, which included over 50 teams from across the country.

A&M Head Coach Ted Nelson said the teams will be just as competitive this season as they were a year ago. "We really had two outstanding teams last year," he said. "I felt we were competitive in every meet. This season our women will be better and will have a lot of success. Our men lost some talented individuals, so we are looking to some underclassmen to step up and fill those holes."

Sophomore sprinter/jumper Toya Jones said the freshmen will be able to fill the void on the men's team.

"We got some very good recruits," Jones said. "I think they'll step right in and pick up our team."

The men will return seven NCAA qualifiers, including sophomore Michael Price and junior Billy Fobbs, both of whom qual-

ified for three events. The men will also return the 400-meter relay team that won the final SWC Championship.

Nelson said his main concern for the men is their middle-distance races.

"The last few years, our field events, sprints and the 400 [meter relay] have been strong events for us and I think we'll continue that tradition," Nelson said. "We'll need someone to step up in the middle-distance races."

On the women's side, the expectations are high. The Lady Aggies will return to competition with nine 1996 NCAA qualifiers, including four All-Americans: Seniors Rosa Jolivet and Anjanette Kirkland, junior Adrienne Sawyer and sophomore April King.

Jolivet and Sawyer each competed in four events at the NCAA Championships, while sophomores Detrich Clariett and Stacy Sykora qualified

"Even though track is mostly an individual sport, it still takes everyone's contributions to win a meet."

Rosa Jolivet
Senior track member

for two apiece. Jolivet said the key to the women's success is their closeness.

"We are a close-knit family," Jolivet said. "Even though track is mostly an individual sport, it still takes everyone's contributions to win a meet."

Jolivet said even with the team's success last year, their performance should improve.

"Last year we had a lot of talent and a lot of people competing in different events — that made us tough," she said. "This year we should be even better because we've added depth to our variety."

Nelson said the teams' goals have re-



Members of the Texas A&M Track Team warm up around the track on Wednesday.

mained constant with their entrance into the new super-conference.

"Our No. 1 goal is to win the first-ever Big 12 Conference Championship," he said.

Nelson also said he feels the talent level of the Big 12 will not be any higher than that of last year's SWC, although the competition will be tougher.

"The old Southwest Conference and the old Big 8 were pretty equal talent-wise," he said. "I think the difference will be more schools. With 12 teams, there's going to be

more quality participants in every event, so it's going to take a higher-quality team to win the Big 12."

Jolivet had a unique perspective on the new experience.

"Change, to me, is a good thing," she said. "I think going into a lot of these meets not knowing what to expect will be to our advantage. We can go out and perform and not worry about who we are competing against."

However, the rest of the Big 12 might want to start worrying about the Aggies.

Aggies journey to Houston for first meet

BY CHRIS FERRELL
THE BATTALION

The weather outside has been frightful, but the track should be delightful as the Texas A&M Track and Field Team begins its indoor season at the Houston Invitational Saturday.

Both the men's and women's teams will look to start the year off on the right foot. Senior All-American Rosa Jolivet, who is the women's only senior, said the young Aggies will use this weekend to gain valuable indoor experience.

"This [meet] is going to be a building point," Jolivet said. "It's going to be a good opportunity for some of the younger people who aren't used to running indoors to come to the older ones for advice."

Sophomore sprinter/jumper Toya Jones agreed. "This is a time for the older guys to help the younger guys out," Jones said.

A&M will compete against the University of Houston, who is hosting the invitational, Rice University, the University of Texas, Louisiana State University, Tulane University, Southern University, and Prairie View A&M University.

A&M Head Coach Ted Nelson said competing against some of the nations other premier programs should help the Aggies get to where they need to be.

"Right now, I think we're a little behind where I thought we'd be," Nelson said. "The weather was not good last week. We've only been able to work outdoors twice."

Nelson said A&M, which is traditionally strong in the sprints and hurdles, should be considered among the favorites to place runners in the 55-meter dash, 55-meter hurdles and relays.

Price shows old neighborhood how it's done

BY DENNIS RAMIREZ
THE BATTALION



Sophomore sprinter Michael Price practices his start at practice on Wednesday.

Everyone remembers what it was like owning the neighborhood bragging rights to be the fastest kid on the block, or at least we remember trying to earn those bragging rights.

For Michael Price this was a strong driving force that propelled him to new heights as a track athlete.

Price, a sophomore sprinter for the Texas A&M Track and Field Team, has proven he has earned bragging rights in his old neighborhood.

"I was in the fifth grade, it was light pole to light pole back then, and there was this guy in the neighborhood who outran everybody," Price said. "That really motivated me and once we arrived at high school, it was a must to run track once you were in football."

During his years at John Tyler High School Price learned to love the sport of track.

On top of earning all-state honors and leading his football team to a state championship, Price earned All-American honors, won two state championship titles, and set new track records.

"In high school I learned that I had a talent for the sport and it was at a point where every time I ran, I tried to improve," Price said. "In the prelims I would set a record and in the finals I would try to break that same record."

Price started A&M on a track scholarship, but found himself playing for the A&M football team.

Although Price skipped his first fall workouts for track, to play football, he was able to become a competitive sprinter and earn a seat at NCAA Outdoor Meet as a freshman standout.

"As a freshman he was able to come in here and compete at the big time level," A&M Head Coach Ted Nelson said. "He was a pleasant surprise to us and performed extremely well last year. This year, I expect him to be stronger and do nothing but improve on last year."

Because Price decided to forgo football this year and concentrate on track, this will be the first complete year of track workouts.

Price said participating in fall workouts will make a difference towards the end of the year.

"Right now I feel really good," Price said. "I went through off season and I am in great shape. Because of this I should run better than I ever have and improve throughout the whole season."

Teammate Larry Wade, a hurdler for the team, credits Price with being blessed with speed and talent.

"Michael's mentality to compete and the fact that he went through fall workouts has given him a strong foundation and the stamina needed to be successful later on down the line through the end of the season," Wade said. "As far as sprinting is concerned he has certainly been blessed and if he can take care of business on and off of the track, he has the ability to become the best sprinter in the world."

Price does not have any big plans for post-collegiate track competition, he is solely concentrating on improvement.

As for his neighborhood back in Tyler, Price owns bragging rights — thanks to the motivation given to him by the guy he once could not outrun.

Speedy Jolivet breaking records at lightning pace

BY NICKI SMITH
THE BATTALION

Many would agree that the word "fast" is an understatement when describing Rosa Jolivet, a senior hurdler and relay team member on the Texas A&M Women's Track Team.

Although Jolivet is only in her

second season at A&M, she already holds A&M individual records in the 100-meter and 400-meter hurdles, and is a member of the A&M record-holding 400-meter, 1,600-meter and shuttle hurdle relay teams.

To top off her record-breaking accomplishments, Jolivet competed in the U.S. Olympic Trials last summer, where she set two school records with times of 13 minutes, .02 seconds in the 100 hurdles and 55 minutes, .91 seconds in the 400 hurdles.

In addition to being a school best,

Jolivet's time in the 100 hurdles also edged her into the semifinal round at the trials, while her time of 55.91 earned her eighth place overall.

Assistant Coach Abe Brown, who is responsible for men's and women's hurdlers and horizontal jumpers for the track team, said Jolivet was a very mature athlete who caught his eye while she was at Forest Brook High School in Houston.

"A good friend of mine pointed her out, so I followed her performance during high school," Brown said. "I liked her humor and poise so I recruited her for our track team."

While at Odessa Junior College, Jolivet led the track team to the national Junior College indoor title in 1992, was ranked among the top 50 in the U.S. in 1995 in both outdoor hurdles events and 29th in the U.S. in the 400-meter hurdles in 1994.

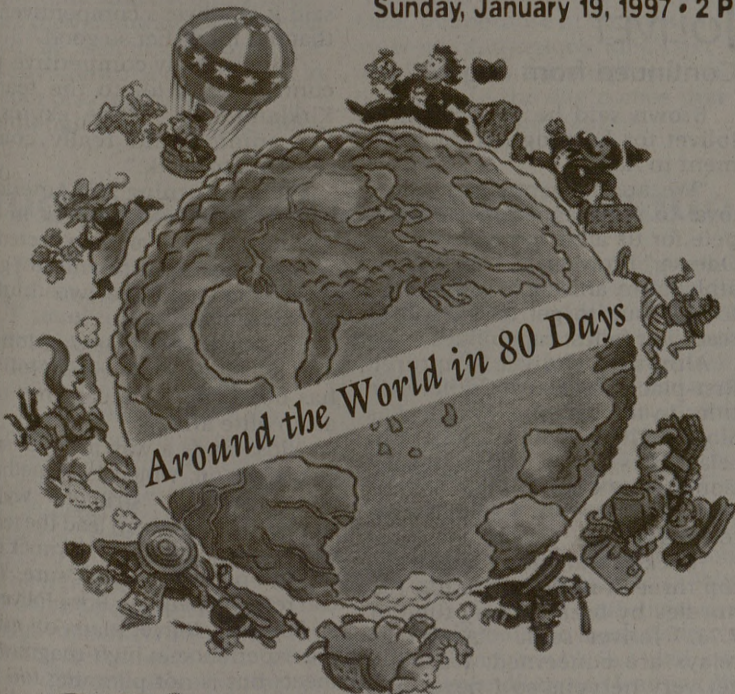


Senior Rosa Jolivet stretches before practice.

See JOLIVET, Page 7

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