

Eye-catching Howard makes splash onto scene

By NICKI SMITH
THE BATTALION

Often times, a high school athlete has trouble attracting the attention of major programs. But for freshman swimmer Devin Howard, this could be further from the truth. Not only did Howard earn enough accolades in high school to be recruited by the Texas A&M Men's Swimming Team, but he was recruited by numerous other programs. Auburn University, the University of Texas, the University of Tennessee, Southern Methodist University and the University of Arizona were among those who also tried to lure Howard to their programs.

"We really want him representing A&M as a student-athlete, in addition to his exceptional speed."

Mel Nash
A&M Head Coach

both swimming and school and has the ability to do really well here. We really want him representing A&M as a student-athlete, in addition to his exceptional speed."

Nash also said Howard could help push the A&M team to the next level of college swimming.

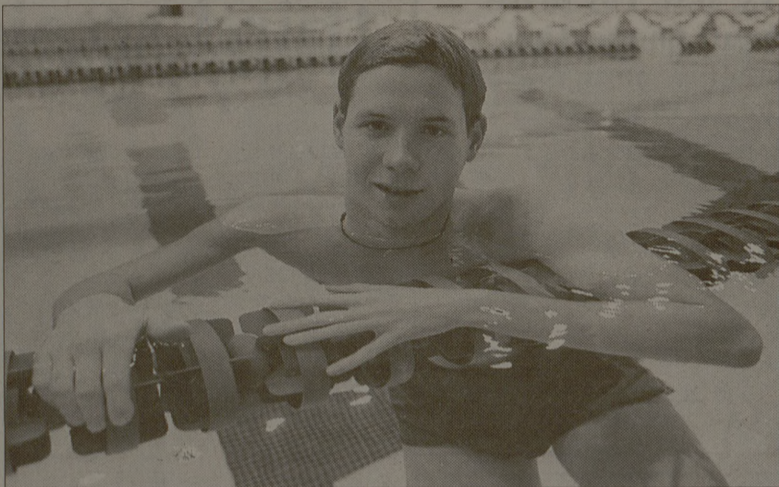
"Devin was interested in our program because he has family ties here at A&M," Nash said. "Aside from that, there are significant changes going on here, and it is exciting for guys to come in and take a team that was in the top 25 in the nation and make it one of the top 15 best teams in the nation."

Among Howard's many events are the 200-meter individual medley, the 50-, 100-, 200- and 500-meter freestyle events, the 100-meter butterfly and the 100-meter breaststroke.

In addition to his numerous individual events, Howard also swims on many of the relay teams, including the 200-meter medley relay and the 200- and 400-meter freestyle relays.

With that long of a list, one would think Howard would have a hard time choosing an event he felt was his best. However, Howard was able to narrow his choices to three events.

"I think I swim the strongest in the 200-meter butterfly, freestyle and the individual medley," Howard said. "I still need to improve my times and fine-tune my strokes, but overall I feel most comfortable with these."



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Freshman swimmer Devin Howard has overcome a shoulder injury and post three of his lifetime best times in meets this season.

In his four-year varsity high school career, Howard received 22 high school All-American certificates. He also received the 1994 Male Swimmer of the Year award at Klein High School and was the 1996 District 21-5A Male Swimmer of the Year.

Howard held seven school records at his high school as well, was a member of the 1995 Junior National Team that competed in France and competed in several national meets, including the 1996 Olympic Trials, the 1994 Olympic Festival and the Phillips 66 Senior National Championships.

Despite his strong background, Howard has had little time to display his talents for the Aggies because of a shoulder injury.

"So far my best meets have been at Louisiana State University and the U.S. Open, but I still feel that I can improve my times," Howard

said. "One of my strong points is my ability to focus and block out distractions, so hopefully it will show in my times."

Howard has been able to clock three of his lifetime best times in nationwide meets. These include a 2:1.68 stint in the 200-meter butterfly, a 56.03-second time in the 100-meter butterfly and a 1:54.45 best in the 200-meter freestyle.

Nash said Howard will keep getting faster now that he has recovered from his shoulder injury.

"Once we got past that, his swimming technique has progressed very well," Nash said. "With his genetic ability, hard work and a little time, he has the tools to be successful in swimming. With that, and having gone to the Olympic trials and other big meets, he should be able to surprise some people."

manager can motivate them.

"The relationship a manager establishes with his players is the most important thing," he said. "You have to get them to believe in what you're trying to do."

"I don't really care what people think. They can speculate all they want about my success or failure, but we'll still play the games."

What most fans across the country may not realize is Dierker is not the first manager to jump into the fire with no previous experience. The New York Yankees' Joe Torre heads a list of big league managers who took their jobs before coaching in the minor leagues.

"I don't feel like I'll be overmatched by other managers," Dierker said. "There are so many decisions a manager makes during the course of a game, you really can't pin the game on one decision. Every situation can go either way, no matter what you do; there's no real right or wrong. Obviously, the guys who do the moves well enough end up staying."

But Dierker emphasizes his belief that handling the players is the key to a manager's success.

"The guys who do it best keep the team going," he said. "They keep the mood right, the atmosphere right and keep everybody motivated."

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