

Track and Field

BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIPS

TEXAS A&M

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A&M track and field team prepares for stiff competition at first league championships

By JEREMY FURTICK
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Men's and Women's Track and Field Teams will get their first taste of Big 12 competition this weekend at the inaugural Big 12 Indoor Conference Championships in Lincoln, Neb.

Head Coach Ted Nelson said the Aggies' in-

experience will be their biggest obstacle at the championships, where some of the top indoor teams in the country will be competing.

"We're almost in a rebuilding stage right now after losing so many outstanding seniors last year," he said. "This meet will be an anxious time for both the coaches and the youngsters, but we expect some leaders to surface this weekend and lead us into the outdoor season."

Nelson said the Big 12 is now the dominant track conference in the country and the competition level will be deep in every event at this weekend's meet.

"It's going to be interesting to see just how good this meet will be," he said. "But I know there's not a more quality meet in the country."

Senior Rosa Jolivet said the teams are going into this meet with the same attitude they have had all season.

"Coach Nelson always preaches 'just compete' to us," Jolivet said. "It's just going to be a matter of knowing this is a big meet and raising our performance for it."

Jolivet is included on a list of Aggies who have a chance to score points in the running events Nelson said. Others on the list include sophomore Mike Price and junior Billy Fobbs in the 55-meter and 200-meter dashes, sophomore Toya Jones in the 55-meter dash and senior Donyale Canada in the women's 55-meter and 200-meter dashes.

Nelson said the multi-event competition is the best bet for the Aggies to score in the meet.

Senior Ryan Theriault and sophomore Toby Ware will challenge for the heptathlon title, and junior Ceci Hudson will compete in

the pentathlon.

Assistant coach Juan De La Garza expects the Aggies' field event squad to perform well. "They've been looking forward to this meet all season," he said.

The Aggie men will be lead by senior Russell Nuti in the 35-pound weight throw and sophomore Mike Lowrance in the shot put. Sophomore Kelli Schrader of the women's team will compete for the Big 12 titles in the 20-pound weight throw and shot put.

Lowrance said the team is focused on the task at hand.

"We're all excited about the meet," Lowrance said. "But everyone will just get settled down and do their own thing."

Nelson said distance competitions will be the Aggies' toughest events.

"With Colorado, Nebraska and Iowa State all running against you in the long and middle-distance races, you're going to have a tough meet," Nelson said.

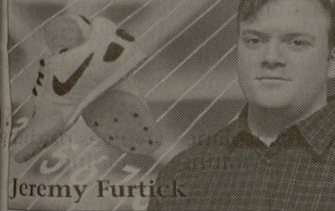
Sophomore Scott Lengefeld and senior James Menze for the men and junior Milli Ondras for the women will be the Aggies' best hopes to score in the distance races.

The Aggies, not a team built for indoor competition, still have several members ranked in the top five in their respective events for the meet. Jolivet is ranked second in the women's 60-meter hurdles and Theriault ranks third in the men's pentathlon.

Ranked fifth in their respective events are Canada in the women's 60-meter dash, junior Adrian Sawyer in the women's triple jump and Hudson in the women's pentathlon.

Aggies shooting for NCAAAs

Track & Field



As the Texas A&M Men's and Women's Track and Field Teams roll closer to the end of the indoor season at the Big 12 Conference Championships this weekend, there is one goal each member would like to achieve — qualifying for the NCAA Indoor Championships March 7-8 in Indianapolis, Ind.

Aggies Missing the Big 12 Championships

The Aggies will miss the contribution of five athletes this weekend at the Big 12 Conference Championships. Seniors Anjanette Kirkland and Danny McCray, although still eligible for the outdoor season, have exhausted their indoor eligibility. McCray and Kirkland have combined for 10 All-American citations during their careers at A&M.

Juniors Larry Wade and Michael McKinney are red-shirting this indoor season due to injuries. Wade, NCAA runner-up in the 110-meter hurdles in 1995, suffered a stress fracture in his back last season. McCray, who earned All-American accolades last season, was injured in an automobile accident but should be ready for the outdoor season.

Sophomore Stacy Sykora, the final Southwest Conference heptathlon champion last year, will miss this weekend's meet because of a commitment to the Lady Aggie Basketball Team.

Aggies Already Qualified for the NCAAAs

Senior Rosa Jolivet is leading the way to Indianapolis for the Aggies. She has posted qualifying times in the 60-meter hurdles in all four meets A&M has participated in this season. Three other Aggies have qualified provisionally for the NCAA Championships prior to their last meet. Senior Donyale Canada qualified in the 55-meter dash, junior Adrian Sawyer in the triple jump and sophomore Mike Price in the 200-meter dash.



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Freshman decathlete Aaron Smith practices his triple jump.



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Senior decathlete Travis Maher practices the pole vault.

Texan by birth, Aggie by last choice

Shot putter Mike Lowrance is less than a two-percenter

By JEREMY FURTICK
THE BATTALION

Ask any Aggie why he or she came to Texas A&M and you will probably hear a testimonial on the traditions and spirit that have come to symbolize A&M. But there are thousands of students at A&M who did not come here because of Aggie folklore. These students came solely for the education and opportunities other schools could not offer.

So maybe sophomore Mike Lowrance came to Texas A&M for the right reasons.

Lowrance, a shot put and discus competitor for the Texas A&M Men's Track and Field Team, had a number of schools requesting his services during his senior year at Temple High School.

Lowrance was a member of the Texas State 5A Division II Football Championship team his junior year and went on to receive first team all-state honors as a center his senior year. It was then he realized football was not in his future.

"During my freshman year of high school I decided to put all my focus on football and a football scholarship," he said. "I worked hard and received honors my senior year, but then I realized I didn't like football anymore."

Lowrance was in a bit of a bind because schools were still offering him scholarships — football scholarships. No one considered he wanted to compete exclusively in track.

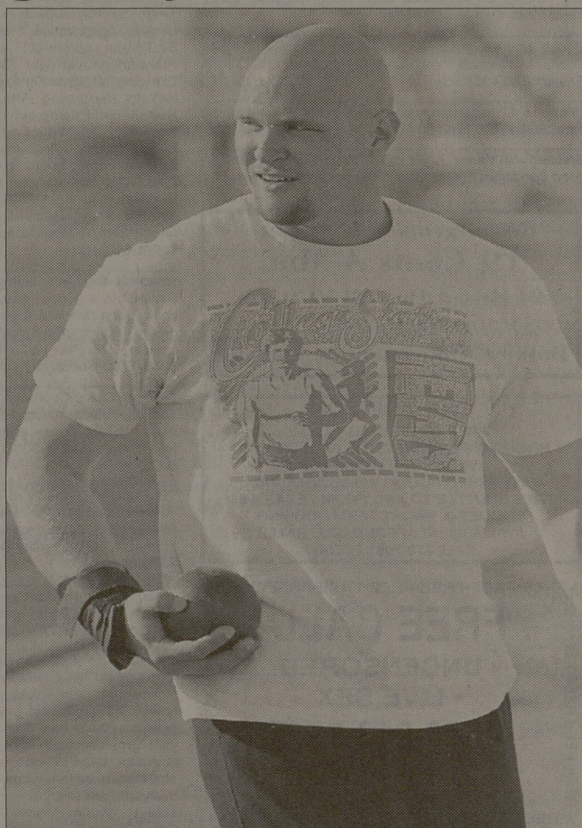
"Even when I was planning on playing football in college, I knew I would still compete in track," he said. "But the track programs weren't recruiting me because everyone thought I was going to school to play football."

Lowrance applied to A&M almost as an outlet. He said he was never intent on going to any particular school, but A&M was still interested in him after his decision to drop football.

"I hadn't applied anywhere else," he said. "It was a good academic school, it was close to home and the thrower's reputation was good."

Head Coach Ted Nelson said the Aggies saw potential in Lowrance and stayed in touch with him when other schools didn't.

"We had some people in Temple that we knew," Nel-



Rony Angkriwan, THE BATTALION

Sophomore Mike Lowrance decided his senior year in high school that he would concentrate on track.

son said. "They told us Mike's work ethic was very good and we saw a good shot putter in him."

Lowrance came to A&M but did not evolve into the prototypical Aggie. In fact, he has a unique way of describing himself.

"I wouldn't even consider myself a two-percenter," he said. "I don't do that much."

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High-jumper Fojtik looking to branch out

By MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

Teri Fojtik did not always enjoy the sport that would become her specialty.

The former Southwest Conference outdoor high jump champion is an experienced competitor capable of qualifying for the NCAA Championships. But she was not always happy about her talent.

"I hated high jumping," said the 5-foot-11 senior from Angleton. "I ran seventh grade track and I was the tallest one, so they stuck me in it."

A two-year letterman and a track team standout, Fojtik reached a crossroads in high school, where she would become a four-time regional qualifier.

"I was really scared of high jumping," Fojtik said. "But when I got to high school, I had my own high jump coach for one year and she was really impressed by how talented I was, so eventually I learned to love it."

While she is content with high jump, Fojtik said she enjoys trying new things and would not mind branching out into other track events.

"I would have loved to do anything else, just for fun, but they (the coaches) wanted me to concentrate on high jumping," Fojtik said. "I don't know if they didn't want me to get hurt playing another event or what, but the high jump is where I am."

Fojtik has no trouble pinpointing the most difficult aspect of the event. Coincidentally, it is also what stands between her and her ultimate goal of jumping six feet, three inches.



Rony Angkriwan, THE BATTALION

Senior Teri Fojtik has one goal — to jump above six-feet, three inches.

"The mental aspect of it," Fojtik said. "When the bar goes up, my whole approach changes. And if I can get over the mental aspect of high jumping, then my personal best would probably improve dramatically."

To help herself in the quest to improve the mental part of her sport, Fojtik separates herself from her competitors and tries not to think of the coming competition. When it is her turn to jump, she tries not to think of all the little things she needs to do, but just to do what she has rehearsed so many times in practice.

"She's learned from experience to not get down if things don't work out early," High Jump Coach Ed Marcinkiewicz said. "If she has an early miss, she stays very focused and competitive."

Sometimes too competitive. As is sometimes true for high-caliber athletes, Fojtik has had trouble with becoming overly anxious about her performance.

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