

SPORTS

Changing of the guard

Texas A&M Men's 4X100-meter relay team eyes NCAAs

BY TOM KENNEDY
The Battalion

Seniors Billy Fobbs, Michael Price, and Toya Jones have seen everything from injuries to NFL contracts since their undefeated run to the 1997 national championship in the 4x100-meter relay with then-senior Danny McCray.

But after the departure of McCray, one of the top sprinters in school history, and Fobbs' layoff from competition last year due to injury, the three are together again for one last run at a championship. A&M track and field coach Ted Nelson said the loss of McCray, currently ranked 10th in the world in the 400-meter dash by Track and Field News, should not hold up his squad.

"McCray was a big factor for us," Nelson said. "But those three guys [Fobbs, Price, and Jones] have the same abilities now."

Nelson could not be more right. Fobbs, Price and Jones all have credentials that stack up against any college athlete.

Fobbs is a two-time All American who ranks as the No. 4 performer at A&M in the 100-meter dash with a personal best of 10.08 seconds. He holds numerous Southwestern Conference and Big 12 Conference Championships and he has a résumé so large that a full page is dedicated to him in the media guide.

Price ranks as the fifth 200-meter sprinter in school history with a clocking of 20.35 seconds. He has twice been named an All-American and has advanced to the semifinal round of the 200-meter dash twice at the NCAA Championships.

Jones, perhaps best known for his four years with the football team, has qualified for the NCAA Outdoor Meet the past three seasons as a member of the 4x100 team and for last year's NCAA Indoor meet in the 55-meter dash. He landed a place in Texas history during his high school years at Refugio as the top career point scorer at the University Interscholastic League State Track and Field Meet.

Nelson said Jones, Fobbs and Price, who will take the second, third and fourth legs, respectively, hold the advantage of having ran together for so long.

"We're fortunate that Toya Jones

has been carrying to Billy Fobbs for a number of years, so [the hand off is] normally not a problem," Nelson said. "Michael Price is used to taking the baton from people."

Jones said the experience has given them the ability to understand their training cycle more effectively.

"We're getting better every week, and we're just gradually building up because we don't want to peak too soon and have a downfall before nationals," he said. "Being together all of these years, we know what we need to do to win."

After a season-long search for the fourth member, Nelson has finally tabbed freshman Brandon Evans as the man. Nelson said Evans will run the lead-off leg as a strategic move to eliminate hand off error due to his inexperience with the relay.

"We only have our freshman handing the baton off," Nelson said. "He doesn't have to take it if we keep running him first."

Fobbs said his new relay partner fits the role more accurately than their old teammate.

"As far as replacing Danny, [Evans] is a true sprinter," Fobbs said. "[Evans] has more turnover, as far as speed because McCray was more of a 200-400 man while [Evans] is more of a 100-200 man."

Evans will need to team up well with the original three to accomplish their coach's goals. Nelson said he expects them to perform well at the Big 12 Conference Meet where four teams other than Texas A&M are ranked in the top 12 of Trackwire's 4x100 rankings.

"Our goal is to win the Big 12 Championship in the 4 x 100 and then move on to the national meet and see what happens."

Once this happens, Jones, Fobbs, and Price can begin to look toward their futures, all of which could include athletics.

Jones, who dazzled pro football scouts with his special-teams play and speed, has decided that his calling will be outside of the track oval.

"I signed with the 49ers, and they told me I could finish doing [track]," he said. "Up at camp, I was with the second team and they told me I was doing pretty good, so [after track season] I'm going to put all of my focus on football."

Fobbs hopes to continue run-



FILE PHOTO/THE BATTALION

A&M senior Toya Jones and the Texas A&M 4X100-meter relay team have made several change-ups in its lineup in pursuit of an NCAA championship.

ning with endorsements after his eligibility is exhausted if he can overcome the hamstring injury he suffered last season.

"If I can get back to where I was in '97, I'm sure I'll be running for somebody," Fobbs said. "The injury really set me back."

Price has decided to take a "wait-and-see" attitude, and just focus on the task at hand - going to nationals.

"I know we can drop 39 [seconds]," Price said. "Even that [38.8 second time from 1997] isn't out of reach."



SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

Aggie freshman Jarin Skube prepares to return the volley during singles action against the University of Texas April 17. The 19th-ranked Texas A&M Men's Tennis Team will compete in the 1999 NCAA Tennis Championships in Austin.

Men's Tennis Team headed for NCAAs

A&M women fail to make tourney field

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

The seedings for the 1999 NCAA Tennis Championships saw the Texas A&M Men's Tennis Team make the field of 64 while the Texas A&M Women's Tennis Team was on the outside looking in.

The 19th-ranked men, a 17-32 seed, will be the No. 2 seed at the tourney first and second round at the University of Texas. The Aggies will play third seed Texas Tech University in the first round. Texas is the No. 1 seed, and Marist University will be the fourth seed to round out the region.

"If I had any complaints about the draw it would be in playing your conference opponents," A&M men's tennis coach Tim Cass said. "All year long and through the latter portion of the season you play each other. To go to the NCAA first and second rounds and potentially play a conference opponent in both rounds is not what it's all about. That's why we play our conference schedule."

The Aggies, who are 14-6 overall in the season, are in the midst of a three-match losing streak, but hold a 5-6 mark against teams in the field of 64. A&M posted a 6-1 win over Louisiana State University, who is

the field's No. 5 overall seed.

The selection committee was not as kind to the 38th-ranked women as they were left out of the field of 64.

The Aggies, who had qualified for the last three NCAA Team Championships, were the highest-ranked team not chosen for the championships.

Twenty-seven lower ranked teams, including 16 teams ranked from 39 to 75 by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association and 11 teams not ranked by the ITA, qualified for the championships.

"We still have to look at the factors they [the NCAA Selection Committee] used," A&M women's tennis coach Bobby Kleinecke said. "We are definitely one of the top teams in the country not to get in. The ITA and NCAA rankings are different. We tell our players that, and they know things are done differently within the committee, but we felt like we had a good shot of getting in."

The Aggies, who were 14-9 overall on the season, tallied wins over Baylor University and the University of Colorado, both of which made the tournament. A&M also held a 4-3 record versus teams seeded 25 to 48 in the championship.

Women's golf ranks 14th after 1st round of tourney

BY MATT WEBER
The Battalion

The Texas A&M Women's Golf Team recorded a score of 313 Thursday to place 14th after one round at the NCAA Women's Golf West Regional at the Pine Forest Country Club in Houston.

The top 11 teams and top two individuals from the regional competition will advance to the NCAA Championships in Tulsa, Okla., on May 19. The Aggies currently are two strokes behind 11th-place San Jose State University.

Ninth-ranked Stanford University recorded a four-over-par 292 in first-round action to take a seven-stroke lead. No. 6 Arizona State University and No. 5 USC tied for second place with a score of 299.

A&M women's tennis coach Jeanne Rutherford said the Aggies performed well despite some mental mistakes.

"Going into the next round, I think we'll be fine," she said. "We need to play better to go on, but we didn't shoot ourselves in the foot. We just need to be a little more focused, and that will make the difference."

In the individual standings, the University of Arizona's Jenna Daniels took a one-stroke lead with a two-under-par 70. Three other players tied for second with a one-under 71. The four were the only players to break par for the round.

The Aggies were led by a trio of six-over performances by junior Anna Becker, sophomore Marta Ostos and freshman Mackenzie Dyslin. Sophomore Mimi Epps trailed her teammates by one stroke with a 79. Freshman Anna Jonsson rounded out the Aggie squad with an 80.

The tournament will continue with 18 holes today and 18 holes Saturday.



SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

Aggie senior Christine Calahan competes in the women's high jump competition at the Texas A&M Invitational April 10 in College Station. The Texas A&M Track and Field teams will host the Aggie All-Comers Meet at the Anderson Track and Field Complex this Saturday, the Aggies' final competition before the Big 12 Conference Championships.

Track teams host home meet

BY TOM KENNEDY
The Battalion

The Texas A&M Men's and Women's Track Teams will take a study break from finals as they host the Aggie All-Comers Meet at the Anderson Track and Field Complex on Saturday, May 8.

The meet will feature full squads from the University of Texas, the University of Houston, Rice University and Clemson University as well as elite athletes who decide to enter under the "all-comers" invitation.

Head Track and Field Coach Ted Nelson said the meet has a history of attracting top athletes who, in hopes of qualifying for the NCAA Championships and the USA Track and Field

Championships, usually provide fast times and high-quality performances.

"Last year, the competition was really good," Nelson said. "A big group [of elite athletes] from Austin is probably coming over."

The collegiate competition will also prove to be fierce. The men's meet will feature the fifth, 11th and 16th ranked teams, respectively, in Texas, Clemson and Houston. The Tigers will provide the Aggies' 4 x 400 team, who crushed their nearest competitor by nearly six seconds last weekend, with an opportunity to lower their season-best and to qualify automatically for the NCAA meet. Clemson's 4 x 400 owns the third fastest time this season while A&M is ranked ninth in the event by Trackwire.

The men's 4x100 relay, which entered Track-

wire's 4x100 rankings at 12th this week, could also see a fast race as Clemson and Texas are both well-respected in the event.

The women will see top-ranked Texas and its sprint unit in full action this weekend. The Longhorns own a large share of the top 10 collegiate times in the 100 meter dash this season as well as top entries in the national 200 and 400 meter standings.

The meet will mark the Aggies last home date this season and their last competition before the Big 12 Conference Championships held May 21-23 in Waco.

The meet will begin with field events at 2 p.m. on Saturday. Running events are slated to start at 6 p.m. and will continue on a rolling schedule.