January 17, 2003

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ed on pg. 7

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THE BATTALION

Friday, January 17, 2003



Junior Ellison Collins clears the bar in the high jump last season. The track team will begin its Spring semester Saturday in Norman, Okla.

Track travels to O

By Jeff Allen THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M men's and women's track and field teams are preparing to start their seventh indoor season as members of the Big 12 Conference Saturday at the Sooner Invitational in Norman, Okla.

In the six years since the Aggies left the former Southwest Conference and joined the Big 12, not only has the competition changed, but much of the philosophy and attitude toward the early portion of the schedule has changed as well.

In the past, the indoor season was viewed as a time of preparation for what had been considered the more important outdoor season later in the year.

'Traditionally we have not put a lot of emphasis on the indoor (season)," said head coach Ted Nelson. "In the old SWC, years ago, not a lot of people had indoor facilities. They were not needed for practice in the South. In the North (teams) can't practice (outside during the winter). The Big 12 has several northern schools. and (now) the indoor championship has become almost as

important for us. The growing importance of the indoor season is illustrated in the team's performance during that stretch the past two years. During the 2001 campaign, the Aggies came out strong early in the year, capturing second place at the Big 12 indoor meet, which became a stepping stone for the squad to claim its first Big 12 championship.

"It kick started our team, (helping us realize) what sort of potential we had outdoors. We

had a lot of our strength in the discuss and the javelin, and we don't get to compete in those events indoors," Nelson said. "It boosted our team's confidence, and we scored more points than had ever been scored, and had the largest margin of victory ever.

Conversely, in the 2002 season, an eighth-place indoor finish led to a sixth-place outdoor finish in the conference.

This year's team will be looking to turn around that finish and return to the top of the Big 12. The men's squad has several athletes returning from last year's team and is looking strong in many areas.

"The strength of the team returning is in the jump areas: long jump, triple jump... and also shot and distance throws and some long distance runners," Nelson said.

For the women, the story is not much different. They will be trying to improve upon a 10th place finish in the indoor season which led to an 11thplace Big 12 finish during the outdoor half of the season.

The women will be showcasing a slightly younger squad, with only a handful of seniors, at the meet on Saturday as they compete opposite the men in Norman.

"(Saturday) will be a good kickoff for the youngsters; they worked all fall, but then were gone for three weeks," Nelson said. "It's not something we expect everyone to be at the top of their game for. We have so many youngsters that I am a little apprehensive about going in, but am interested to see how they perform. I'm excited to see how the new athletes compete against some big-time competition.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tennis team sends members to Rice

Members of the Texas A&M men's tennis team will be traveling to Houston Friday to compete in this weekend's Met Business Sports Club/Rice University Indoor Tennis Tournament.

The tournament will host 16 teams and will run through Sunday evening.

Matches are set to begin at 8:30 a.m. each day and run

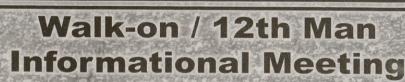
through approximately 9 p.m.

The Aggie team is currently ranked No. 13 in the nation and sophomores Lester Cook and Ante Matijevic are teamed as the No. 5 doubles tandem in college tennis.

The duo is coming off of a victory against the No. 2 ranked team of Michael Calkins and Amer Delic from Illinois.

Rice's twin juniors Richard and William Barker are the No. 1 tandem in the nation.

TEXAS A&M * FOOTBALL



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Jan 9, 1:00 - 4:00 Blocker

Jan 10, 1:00 - 4:00 SCC

Jan 13, 2:00 - 5:00 SCC

Jan 14, 1:00 - 4:00 West Campus

Jan 15, 10:00 - 1:00 Blocker

Jan 15, 4:00 - 7:00 SCC Jan 16, 9:00 - 12:00 SCC

Jan 17, 11:00 - 2:00 West Campus

Drop by any time during the above hours

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OPENINGS INCLUDE:

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- Sports Writer
- Radio Reporter
- **Opinion Columnist**
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- Copy Editor Photographer
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Turn in applications at 014 (basement) Reed McDonald Building.