

NU track teams travel to UTEP

By Andrew Strnad
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's and women's track and field teams will send some of their finest athletes to compete against the world's best this weekend at the Texas-El Paso Invite.

World-record holder Donovan Bailey will headline a group of several Atlanta Olympians at one of the NCAA's most competitive meets of the year.

The Cornhuskers will send more than 40 athletes to UTEP to take advantage of the high altitude and windy conditions in El Paso, Texas, to set some good marks.

Nebraska Throws Coach Mark Colligan said anything can happen at the meet.

"It's always crazy in El Paso," Colligan said. "You've got the wind blowing in every direction, and you're up at 4,000 feet. So a lot of things can happen."

Colligan said a lot of records are set at the meet because of the ideal conditions. A year ago UTEP's Obadele Thompson ran a wind-aided 9.69 100-meter dash — the fastest time ever recorded in the event.

Even though some athletes will be competing in only their first or second meets of the outdoor season, the Huskers have set 12 NCAA automatic and provisional qualifying marks.

Junior shot putter Tressa Thomp-

"It's always crazy in El Paso."

MARK COLLIGAN
NU throws coach

son, who won the NCAA indoor title last March, has put herself in good position to win the outdoor crown with an early season throw of 58 feet, 5 3/4 inches, the nation's current second-best mark.

"It's early in the year, and she's starting to pick it up," Colligan said. "But I'm not going to make any predictions right now."

Nebraska will also send some of its athletes to Saturday's Tom Botts Invite in Columbia, Mo.

Medium sprint and long distance runners will dominate the meet.

Providing an early spark for the Husker women in the medium sprints is freshman Stella Klassen. Klassen has posted the fifth fastest time in the nation in the 400 meters with a time of 53.62 seconds.

Klassen is one of many freshman making early contributions to the team, which gives NU Assistant Coach Steve Smith reason to be optimistic.

"We've got three or four, maybe more, that have definitely helped us out," Smith said. "That is good news of course."

NU prepares for tough foes

By Vince D'Adamo
Staff Reporter

The way the schedule in the next two weeks looks for the Nebraska soccer team, the Cornhuskers aren't taking any breathers.



Uppinghouse

NU will take on Notre Dame — the NCAA Championship runner-up — on Saturday at South Bend, Ind., followed by an April 18 game with NCAA champion North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Nebraska concludes its spring slate with an April 26 game against the U.S. Under-20 National Team, which has defeated the Tar Heels this spring.

Husker Coach John Walker said the next few weeks will be a good measuring stick for when the real season begins in August.

"We couldn't ask for three harder games," Walker said. "The most important thing is we'll know exactly where we stand. We'll have a really good idea of what we need to work on come the fall."

"We'll have a really good idea of what we need to work on come the fall."

JOHN WALKER
NU soccer coach

Senior midfielder Kari Uppinghouse said NU will like nothing better than to go into its fall season with a full head of steam.

"We want to finish these next few games strong," Uppinghouse said. "We've been preparing for them because they're all top-five teams."

Against one Final Four team this spring, Nebraska has been successful. The Huskers rallied to win at Santa Clara 2-1 on March 15.

NU enters this weekend's action pretty healthy.

The only significant injury this spring came when senior defender Tanya Franck sustained a medial collateral ligament injury to her knee. Franck did return to practice Monday.

"She looked good," Walker said. "We'll see how she does as the week goes on."

Overall, the Huskers' workout schedule has tapered slightly as of late, Walker said, but the team still remembers how it became a success last season.

"We've backed off on weights to two times a week," Walker said. "We gave them a week off for spring break, then last week they had four hard practices. We know we ask a lot of them, but they're holding up well."

In practice, Nebraska has been working on offense, Walker said, by focusing on crossing and flank plays.

Uppinghouse said things have gone well.

"We've been working on a lot of competitive things," Uppinghouse said. "Just going hard with a lot of one-on-ones. Also, we've been working on bringing the ball out of the back, looking for shorter passes and working the ball through the midfield."

Huskers add 3 guards, lose Mitchell

HOOPS from page 9

Playing 40 minutes in place of an injured Tyrone Lue on Dec. 31, Mitchell scored a career-high 16 points in an 84-73 loss to Cincinnati in the Puerto Rico Holiday Classic.

Mitchell sat out the 1995-96 season as an academic casualty and will be forced to redshirt next season — with two years of eligibility remaining — if he transfers to a Division I university.

Smith, Cochran and Williams will play a large part in replacing Mitchell next season, Nee said. Each of the three guards visited Lincoln the first weekend of March, when they watched Nebraska's regular season-ending 85-65 loss to Kansas before a season-high crowd of 14,759 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"We just think they're solid players," Nee said. "We recruit for two reasons, one for long term and one for short term. These players will contrib-

ute to the short term, but we're also excited about their long-term potential.

"They are eager to learn, and talented, and their best basketball is ahead of them."

Smith, who averaged 22 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists per game last season at Baldwin High School, has not qualified academically and needs a score of 17 on the ACT to become eligible to play next season.

Nee said he expects the guard trio to adjust well to the college game playing behind Lue, a junior next year, and sophomore Cookie Belcher.

"Someday, we won't have Tyrone Lue," Nee said, "and these young players will have to take control. But I don't think they can play or practice with anybody better than those two."

The Huskers, who now have 10 of 13 scholarships filled for next season — including 6-11 November signee Brant Harriman of Mason City, Iowa — continue to recruit 6-10 forward

Antoine Broxsie of Tampa and 6-10 center Steven Eldridge of Tyler (Texas) Junior College.


Signing a post player to replace the departed Bernard Garner and Mikki Moore now becomes "a very important" objective in the month-long signing period, Nee said.

Notes:

Lue has been invited to try out for the USA Men's Under-22 World Championship Team and the U.S. World University Games Team. Two 12-member teams will be selected from the May 30-through-June 2 try-outs at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

Playing for a group of professional scouts, Moore averaged 7.5 points, 8.5 rebounds and blocked six shots in two games at the Portsmouth (Va.) Invitational Tournament, April 2 through 5.

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Huskers take on A&M

AGGIES from page 9

"They're all good ball clubs."

Against the northern teams of the conference, Texas A&M is 6-3 — including a three-game sweep of Iowa State last weekend.

"I don't think about sweeping teams," Johnson said. "I think of winning series. In this league, you have to count your blessings if you win a series. It's unrealistic to say we will sweep them this weekend."

The Aggies enter the series batting .323, led by sophomore outfielder Jason Tyner who leads the Big 12 with 68 hits.

Husker senior Steve Fish will make his ninth start today looking to improve his 6-3 record. The right-hander ranks second in the Big 12 in wins and owns a 4.57 earned-run average.

But the Aggies' main concern, Johnson said, is NU first baseman Todd Sears. The All-America candidate is batting a team-high .446 this season and has knocked six hits in his last nine at bats.

"Sears is really tearing it up,"

Johnson said. "He is protected well in their lineup. (Francis) Collins is hitting very well, so it's hard to pitch around him. As a team they are almost hitting .300 so they are a pretty good hitting club."

As a team Nebraska is batting .293, but the Husker bats will be up against an Aggie pitching staff that owns a 4.53 ERA — second best in the conference.

Texas A&M had a seven-game winning streak snapped Tuesday in a 10-4 loss to Southwest Texas in the fourth game of a nine-game homestand. The Aggies own a 19-8 record at Olsen Field.

"Getting home has helped us," Johnson said. "We're better than where we were when we started the season, but we still need to make up some ground."

The Aggies rank sixth in the Big 12 — 3 1/2 games behind league-leading Texas Tech (12-3).

The Huskers are 6 1/2 games behind the Red Raiders and rank tenth in the conference. Only the top six teams qualify for the Big 12 tournament May 15 through 18 in Oklahoma City.

Nebraska returns home to play Hastings College on Tuesday at 2:30 p.m. at Buck Beltzer Field.

Weather affects Huskers

From Staff Reports

The NU softball team's four-game homestand this weekend is feeling the effects of the inclement weather.

The Cornhuskers (15-15 overall and 2-2 in the Big 12 Conference) will not play Baylor (28-19 and 1-7) in a doubleheader on Saturday as scheduled. The games with the Bears have been moved to Monday at 1 p.m. at the NU softball complex.

Nebraska is still scheduled to play Texas Tech in a doubleheader on Sunday starting at noon. The Huskers' game with Iowa State on Thursday was canceled because of the weather.

After the Baylor games Monday, NU is scheduled to play at Creighton in a doubleheader on Tuesday.