

Digest

Three students, alumni in Olympics

Three former ACU track and field standouts were expected to represent the Wildcats in this year's Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

Delloreen Ennis-London ('99) was to run the 100-meter hurdles for Jamaica, while **Christie VanWyk** ('04) was to compete in the 100 meters for Namibia and **Nic Alexander** ('03) was to run the 100 meters and be on the 4x100 relay team for Trinidad.

All three former Wildcats are Olympic veterans, having appeared in the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia. Ennis-London, who goes into this year's Olympics ranked fifth in the world in her event, finished fourth in the 100-meter hurdles in 2000, the best-ever individual Olympic finish by a Wildcat female.

Dunavant, Webb named to Wildcat training staff

Former assistant athletics trainers **J.D. Dunavant** and **Britney Webb** have each been promoted to lead the Wildcat athletics training program.

Dunavant has been named the director of athletics training and head men's athletics trainer, while Webb has been named the head women's athletics trainer.

The 2004-05 school year will be the fifth at ACU for Dunavant, a University of Louisiana-Monroe graduate. Webb, a graduate of Tarleton State University, is starting her third year at ACU.

Rams sign Lucas, Lively retires

Former ACU defensive back **Justin Lucas** ('99) signed a one-year free-agent contract with the St. Louis Rams after being released by the Arizona Cardinals in May.

Lucas had 23 tackles in 11 games last season with the Cardinals, but ankle injuries limited his playing time.

Also, former ACU all-America offensive lineman **Britt Lively** was forced into early retirement from the NFL after severe body cramps during off-season workouts with the Rams forced him to give up the game.

Alumnus chosen to lead THSCA

Former ACU basketball letterman and current Abilene Wylie High School director of athletics and head football coach **Hugh Sandifer** ('79) has been elected president-elect of the Texas High School Coaches' Association.

Sandifer, who begins his 19th season as the head coach at Wylie in 2004, will begin as president of the organization in 2005.

Question marks abound as Wildcats begin 2004 season

The last two seasons have seen the ACU Wildcats re-establish themselves as one of the teams to beat in the Lone Star Conference.

While the back-to-back 6-4 seasons and the 2002 LSC South Division co-championship are nice, fifth-year head coach Gary Gaines is eager for the program to take the next step toward winning a league

Sophomore defensive back Danieal Manning has been named pre-season all-America

title and reaching the NCAA Division II playoffs.

With unanswered questions at a few key positions, the Wildcats have been picked to finish third in the LSC South Division behind Texas A&M-Kingsville and Midwestern State. Despite a 10-2 record in the LSC South in the last two years, ACU hasn't been picked higher than third in either of those seasons.

"We've knocked on the door (to winning the LSC South) a little bit the last few years, but now we need to see if we can continue that progress," said Gaines, who is 16-25 in his four previous seasons at ACU. "Expectations are a good thing, and I want our players to have high expectations for this football team and for this season."

One of the key positions with a new starter will be quarterback where senior Greg Wiggins is the unquestioned leader for the first time in his career. Wiggins spent his first three seasons as the backup to Colby Freeman. He has started eight games in his career, and his 387 yards passing in his starting debut in 2001 is the best by a quarterback in ACU football history.

Sophomore Mark Gaines is listed as the starter at running back entering the season after what Gaines (no relation to his player) called a "really outstanding spring." Rashon Myles and Charles Williams also will see time, giving the Wildcats their best trio of backs since Gaines arrived on The Hill.

The offensive line will be thin, but will be led by senior Charles Mock, junior Josh Lively and sophomores Cody Savage and Cody Stewart, all of whom started in 2003. Dillon Cobb is the only returning receiver who caught a pass in 2003, but the Wildcats have a talented group of younger players who could help immediately, led by former Abilene High all-state wideout Jerale Badon.

Defensively, the first name on everyone's lips will be sophomore defensive back Danieal Manning who returns after picking off six passes and earning third team all-America honors in 2003. Last

Mosley named athletics director

Jared Mosley ('99) never wasted much time making his presence felt on the basketball court during his all-America career with the Wildcats.



Similarly, he hasn't wasted much time in making an impression on the ACU athletics program. On July 1 he was named the seventh director of athletics in school history after spending the two

previous years as the associate director of athletics for operations.

"ACU has one of the great athletics traditions in all of NCAA Division II, and we look forward to that continuing in the 2004-05 school year and beyond," ACU president **Dr. Royce Money** ('64) said. "I am very confident in Jared and the abilities that he brings to the job, and I'm looking forward to seeing him lead our athletics program into the university's second century."

Mosley finished his career as the 11th-leading scorer in school history, and in his senior season (1998-99) he led ACU to the NCAA Division II South Central Region title game.

"I've always envisioned myself in this job, and it's always been a job I wanted," Mosley said. "The last two years have been a good experience for me, and they've allowed me to establish a good relationship with our staff. I'm excited about this opportunity." ▲



GERALD EWING

year's LSC South Division Freshman of the Year, Manning will be the lynchpin of what could be the best secondary in the conference, if not the NCAA Division II West Region.

Junior Clayton Farrell, who had eight sacks last year, returns to the defensive line at end, and he'll be joined up front by Mark Malunow and Joe Edwards, a second-team all-LSC South selection in 2003. The defensive line may not have the kind of depth so critical to the defensive unit's success the last two seasons.

The linebacker group will be led by senior Shawn Taylor and junior Matt Allen. Brandon Henry moves to outside linebacker from the secondary, and his speed on the outside could give ACU another playmaker in the front seven.

Senior Eben Nelson has a chance to break virtually every school placekicking record by the time the season is over, and punter Chase Fishback returns to give the Wildcats a solid special teams unit.

ACU's season opens Sept. 4 when the Wildcats travel to Edmond, Okla., to play Central Oklahoma at 6 p.m. ▲

Senior placekicker Nelson close to rewriting most Wildcat records for placekicking

Eben Nelson has heard all the old clichés about placekickers before, namely the one that says kickers “aren’t real football players.”

And while the senior placekicker from Stephenville isn’t ready to debate anyone on the finer points of the game, he will say his position is one “where you just have to be ready to do your job when it’s your turn.”

Over the last three years, Nelson has more than done his job for the Wildcats.

The end of the 2004 season should find Nelson holding virtually every career placekicking record in ACU history, with one notable exception – longest field goal. That record, of course, is held by **Ove Johansson** (’77), who in 1976 kicked a 69-yard field goal, still the longest in football history.

“A lot of guys go to schools with a realistic opportunity of breaking the school record for the longest field goal,” Nelson said. “When I saw what the record is here, I knew immediately there was no chance. That’s one that will probably never be broken.”

Nelson, though, has several other records in sight, including most career field goals, most career kicking points and most career point-after attempts converted.

“I never really thought about all of those records when I first started at ACU,” Nelson said. “I came here because I thought I might have a chance to start with all the problems ACU had with its kicking situation the year before. I’ve been fortunate to have some of the chances I’ve had the last three years.”

And Nelson has made the most of almost all of them, including one October night in 2002 when he kick-started the Wildcats’ drive to a Lone Star Conference South Division title. ACU led nationally ranked Eastern New Mexico most of the night before the Greyhounds pulled ahead 19-17 late in the game.

But when ACU quarterback Colby Freeman (’04) engineered a length-of-the-field drive – keyed by his 32-yard scramble on the last offensive play of the game – he gave Nelson a chance to win the game as

time expired. Nelson never even took into account a stiff breeze blowing in his face when he swung his left leg through the ball. The game-ending horn sounded just seconds before the 49-yard attempt split the uprights to give ACU its first win of the season.

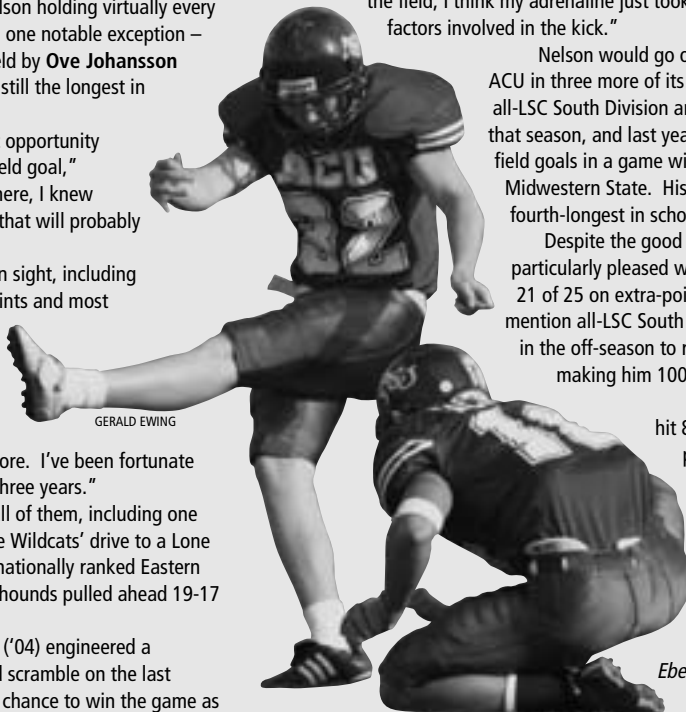
“That’s definitely the personal highlight for me,” Nelson said. “Colby did such a great job of getting our team into position to win the game, and when I went out on the field, I think my adrenaline just took over because I don’t remember any of the factors involved in the kick.”

Nelson would go on to provide the game-winning points for ACU in three more of its six victories in 2002. He earned first team all-LSC South Division and first team NCAA all-West Region honors that season, and last year as a junior he tied the school record for field goals in a game with four in the Homecoming win over Midwestern State. His 53-yard field goal in that game is the fourth-longest in school history.

Despite the good things he did last year, Nelson wasn’t particularly pleased with a season (11 of 20 on field goals and 21 of 25 on extra-point attempts) that brought honorable mention all-LSC South Division honors. Nelson had surgery in the off-season to repair damage to his right (plant) leg, making him 100 percent for his senior year.

“Personally, I want to be an all-America, hit 85 percent of my field goals and 100 percent of my extra points,” Nelson said. “But my main goal is to help this team win a conference championship in any way I can.”

Sounds like a real football player talking. ▲



Eben Nelson (32) is a senior from Stephenville.

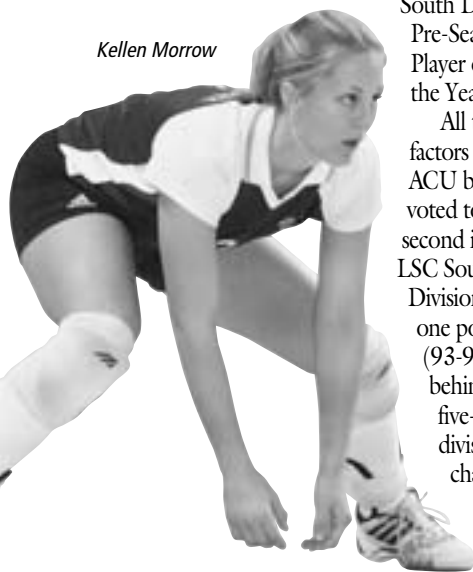
Wildcats set for season that could end up with first bid to NCAA regional tournament

There’s probably no point in ACU head coach Brek Horn downplaying her team as it enters the 2004 season.

After all, the Wildcats return five of six starters, two first team all-Lone Star Conference South Division players in Michelle Bernhardt and Amanda Slate, and, in Bernhardt, this year’s LSC South Division Pre-Season Player of the Year.

All those factors led to ACU being voted to finish second in the LSC South Division, just one point (93-92) behind five-time division champion

Kellen Morrow



GERALD EWING

West Texas A&M. ACU, in fact, had more first-place votes (9-8) than the Lady Buffs.

“I like that people recognize our program,” said Horn, who is 114-57 in her five seasons as ACU’s head coach. “It’s a compliment that other people believe our program is in a place it needs to be, and that is competing for a conference championship.”

Last year as a sophomore, Bernhardt recorded 623 kills, the second-greatest single-season total in school history. She earned first team all-LSC South honors last year, and expectations for her could be even higher in 2004.

“I talked to Michelle about being the pre-season MVP, and she said it didn’t mean anything,” Horn said. “She expects more from herself than anyone else expects.”

Slate is one of the top two-way players in the LSC, and her physical presence (6 feet tall, long wingspan) makes her an intimidating force. Last year she had 116 blocks (second in the LSC) to go along with 382 kills.

“Amanda is maturing and developing, and she’s finally comfortable in her position and as a leader on our team,” Horn said. “Our setters are comfortable with her, and they’ll feed her a lot of balls during the course of the season. And because she’s a flashy player and such a physical presence, she’s feared throughout our league.”

Senior libero Kellen Morrow – this team’s

vocal leader on and off the floor – returns for her senior season, and she should be one of the best in the league at her position. Senior middle blocker Sophia Kindred also is back after a solid summer of work that should give her a shot at a starting spot.

The Wildcats also are deep at the setter position where junior Lindsey Martin and Malia Plumlee will each see time. Martin is in the top five in career assists, and she has two of the top 10 single-season assist totals in school history.

Newcomers Terah Brown, Ashley Baird, Abbie Lowry, Liz Snoddy and Allie Watts give Horn as much depth as she has had in five previous seasons.

And Horn hopes all those players will lead to ACU’s first-ever appearance in the NCAA Division II playoffs. The NCAA has increased the regional tournament from six to eight teams, giving the Wildcats a great chance to reach the tournament. ACU finished seventh in the region in 2003 after a slow season start, and a first-round loss in the LSC Post-Season Tournament probably cost it a chance at the tourney.

“We’ve talked a lot about a need for consistency from the beginning of the season through to the end,” Horn said. “We can’t get off to another poor start or play poorly at the end of the season and expect to get into the tournament. But we definitely have the makings to be a team that can do some great things this year.” ▲

Wildcat basketball teams eager to unveil 'new-look' rosters for fans, foes

ACU basketball fans better make sure they pick up a program before the men's and women's teams play their first home games of the 2004-05 season, because chances are the fans won't recognize a good portion of either team.

The men's team – entering its third year under the direction of head coach Klint Pleasant and coming off a 12-15 season – will feature six new players (via transfer or signing), including junior college all-America forward



Stephanie Riles

Hakim Rasul of Midland College. "We've got a lot of new faces, but I think we'll have a team that can compete for a Lone Star Conference South Division championship," said Pleasant. "We've really upgraded ourselves in terms of size, strength, speed and athletic ability."

On the women's side, gone will be the familiar faces of graduates Melanie Carter, Lynsie Blau, Leah Wilson, Jackie Vinson and Jenny Jackson.

Third-year head coach Shawna Lavender has five new players on the roster, led by freshman point guard Alex Guiton, who won a pair of state championships at Fort Worth Christian High School.

"We lost a lot of great talent, but we've got some good players coming in," said Lavender, who last year led the Wildcats to a 19-10 record and a spot in the LSC Post-Season Tournament. "Plus, we'll have what might be the best backcourt in the league in Ashley King and Kristal Robeson, as well as other experienced players coming back."

For the first time since at least the mid-1990s, the ACU women will be a guard-oriented team instead of one that depends upon a dominant inside presence.

King (shooting guard) and

Robeson (point guard) give the Wildcats one of their best backcourt combinations in several years, and each will be counted on to pick up the scoring void left by Carter and Blau.

King had a memorable sophomore year in 2003 when she not only set the school record for 3-pointers in a season (76), but also broke the NCAA Division II record for consecutive 3-pointers made (14) and tied the record for most 3-pointers made in a game without a miss (8-for-8 in the Wildcats' LSC Post-Season Tournament win over East Central).

King averaged 12.4 points per game in 2003-04, while Robeson averaged 4.6. Stephanie Riles averaged 5.8, followed by Barbee (4.2), Doyle (3.3) and Boles (2.6).

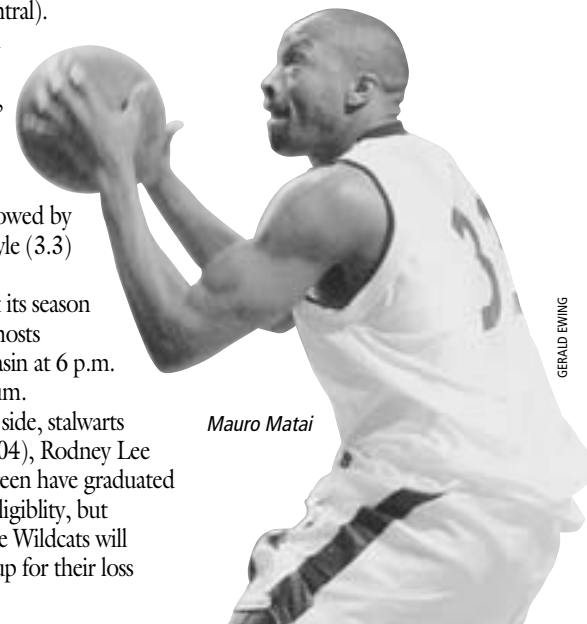
ACU will start its season Nov. 15 when it hosts Texas-Permian Basin at 6 p.m. at Moody Coliseum.

On the men's side, stalwarts Tucker Pierson ('04), Rodney Lee ('04) and Cliff Green have graduated or used up their eligibility, but Pleasant thinks the Wildcats will more than make up for their loss

with the additions of six new players and the development of 6-5 junior forward Mauro Matai.

Rasul is the headliner, but point guard Joe Carr (transfer from Central Michigan University) also could play a big role, as could guard Dionte Gill and forward Tony Brown (6-8, 255).

The Wildcats have a big opening week to the season, including back-to-back exhibition games at Arkansas (Nov. 12) and Western Kentucky (Nov. 13), followed by the season-opener on Nov. 16 against Rhema Bible College. ▲



Mauro Matai

Men's team enters 'rebuilding' phase, while women look forward to berth at nationals

The last four years have been very kind to the ACU men's cross country team. In each of those seasons the Wildcats won both the Lone Star Conference and NCAA Division II South Central Region team championships on their way to runner-up finishes at the national meet.

But with only two runners returning from last year's national runner-up team, head coach **Jon Murray** faces the most serious rebuilding job of the men's team that he's encountered in the last several years.

Although, when one of those returning athletes is seven-time national champion **Bernard Manirakiza**, how hard can the rebuilding job really be?

"Well, we've had to do some major rebuilding on the men's side," said Murray, who has led the men's team to 13 straight conference titles. "If we can mix the new guys with Bernard and **Martin O'Kello** (the only other returning runner from 2003), we'll have another good team and would have a realistic shot at a top-10 finish at the national meet.

Manirakiza won four national championships last year in track and field, winning the mile and 800 meters indoors and the 800 meters and 1500 meters outdoors. Last fall during cross country season he won individual LSC and regional titles before finishing fifth at the national meet.

He will be joined by O'Kello (sixth at last year's national meet to earn all-America honors), **Vincent Morogah** and junior college transfer **Lucky Hadebe** as the Wildcats' top four. Hadebe has been one of the top junior college distance runners

in the nation the last two years at Cloud County Community College (Kan.).

On the women's side, **Adeh Mwamba** will be the leader of a team that could challenge for the regional championship.

Mwamba won two individual national cross country titles during her two-year stint at South Plains College, and last spring at ACU she helped the women's track and field team to a third-place finish at the NCAA Division II outdoor championships with a third-place finish in the 5000 meters.

A few weeks earlier at the Lone Star Conference meet in Kingsville, Mwamba became the first athlete in LSC history to win the 800 meters, 1500 meters, 3000 meters and 5000 meters at the same meet.

She'll be joined by **Olha Kryv'yak** and junior college transfer **Trina Cox** in the Wildcats' top three. Kryv'yak finished second to Mwamba in the 1500 meters, 3000 meters and 5000 meters at the LSC meet, and went on to finish seventh in the 3000 meters at the national meet.

Cox transfers to ACU from Santa Rosa Junior College (Calif.) where she was a standout cross country and track and field distance runner. She won the state junior college cross country title in 2001 and finished second in the race in 2002.

"Trina is a big addition for us," said Murray, who has led the ACU women to three straight LSC titles. "We've got a good mix of older, experienced runners and fresh faces. If that mix works, we have the potential to qualify for nationals and do well at the meet." ▲



Bernard Manirakiza helped ACU to its fourth straight national runnerup finish in 2003.

GERALD EWING