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01/17/1984 - Track Teams Start Indoor Season

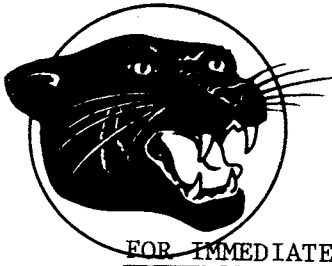
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Panther Sports News

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, Charleston, IL 61920

DAVID KIDWELL, *Sports Information Director*

OFFICE: (217) 581-2920

HOME: (217) 345-4166

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LS-AS-Hts-Track

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University men's and women's track teams will begin a strenuous four month indoor/outdoor season by hosting Southeast Missouri in a coed dual meet at 2 p.m. Saturday (Jan. 21) in Lantz Fieldhouse.

The men traditionally have been strong in distance running events but a vastly improved weight corps will give EIU more balance than in recent years.

Four team captains, Roxy Wood, (Pekin), Jim Lail (Dolton-Thornridge), Claude Magee (Clermont, FL) and Nick Whiteside (Mt. Vernon), will lead 14 returning lettermen.

"Overall we have a more well-rounded team plus an excellent group of freshmen and sophomores," said 10th year coach Neil Moore. "Our goal will be to win the Mid-Continent plus qualify individuals for the indoor and outdoor national championships."

The return of Magee enhances those goals. A NCAA sprint qualifier two years ago, Magee suffered through an injury plagued season in '83. He holds school records in the 60 (6.1) and 300 (30.8) yard dashes indoors and 100 (10.25) meters outdoors.

"Claude is healthy now and if we can keep him competing on the track it will be a major plus. We plan to take him out of the long jump in order to remove some stress from his knees . . . plus he can concentrate more on the sprints," Moore explained.

Wood, a sophomore pole vaulter, is EIU's leading returning scorer and overall was No. 3 last year with 69 points. His best vault was a frosh record 15-9 and he won four meets including the Georgia and EIU Relays.

The best weightmen are sophomores Dan Matas (Oak Park-River Forest), who set a freshman indoor shot put record of 51-8½, Larry Thoennissen (Morton), who won the Mid-Continent hammer title and later set a varsity mark of 167-3, and Kentucky transfer Jim Lail (Dolton-Thornridge), who "has the potential to become the best all-around weightman in EIU history," said assistant coach Tom Akers.

Senior Rick Francis (Oakland), who sat out last year, is another excellent hammer thrower. Austin Lockett (Effingham-St. Anthony), who took second in the javelin in the

Illinois Intercollegiate and league meets, is the best in that event.

Freshmen Chris Johnson (Peoria-Manual), the high school Class AA 400 meter champ (48.6), and Mark Smith (Tuscola), who was 4th in Class A at 50.3 but has run a 48.9, are top recruits in the longer sprints.

Veterans Paul West (Country Club Hills-Hillcrest), the team's 4th leading scorer in '83, and Drew Geisler (Granite City-South) are the best in the middle distances. Cross country MVP John Gassmann (Olney) anchors the distance running corps.

Mattoon's Perry Edinger, a senior who has won two Mid-Continent steeplechase championships, returns only for the outdoor season after sitting out last spring with an injury.

Craig DeWall (Forrester) is the most versatile hurdler winning the Mid-Continent 110 highs two years ago and finishing second in the 400 intermediates last year.

Coach John Craft's lady Panthers are led by sprinters Sonya Brown (Chicago-Dunbar), Gail Stephens (Evanston) and Renee Johnson (Chicago-South Shore) and distance ace Margaret Smith (Effingham-St. Anthony).

Smith set a Gateway Conference record winning the 1500 meter run last spring in 4:28 and also took first in the 1000 yard run in 2:35.38 at the GCAC indoor meet.

Brown set a conference record 12.16 in the 100 meter prelims at the league meet but only took sixth place in the finals although earlier in the year she was second indoors in the 60 yard dash. Stephens took second last year in the 200 and 400 meters outdoors, and ran a leg on the winning mile relay.