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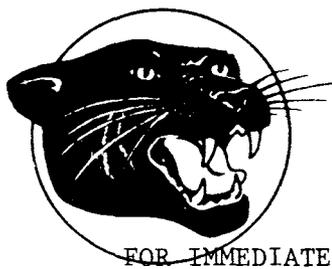
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Panther Sports News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University's track Panthers will likely be chasing Northern Iowa in pursuit of the AMCU-8 Championship this Friday and Saturday (May 5-6) at Macomb.

EIU's blue Panthers finished just eight points back of the UNI purple Panthers during the winter's indoor conference meet, and have added some quality people outdoors.

"We didn't have Perry Edinger, A. J. Lockett or Mike Kelly indoors and hopefully they can make a difference," said assistant coach Tom Akers.

Edinger (Mattoon) will go in the 3000 steeplechase along with the 5000 and 10,000 runs. Lockett is pushing 200 feet in the javelin and Kelly is the top horizontal jumper.

Olympic caliber sprinter Claude Magee (Clermont, FL) is projected as a probable double winner in the 100 and 200 dashes having run those in 10.2 and 20.6 earlier this year. He's also entered in the 400 relay and "maybe the 1600 relay," says Akers.

The Panthers should also pick up quite a few points in the weight events. EIU record holder Dan Matas (Oak Park-River Forest) will go head-to-head in the shot put against his brother, Marion, who is at Western Illinois.

They each threw 56-5 at EIU's Pepsi Challenge recently with Dan's distance a school record. Sophomore Larry Thoennissen (Morton) may gather the most points as he's entered in the shot, hammer and discus. He recently threw the shot 52-6, topped 170 in the hammer and is the defending AMCU-8 champ in that event.

Rick Francis (Oakland) is EIU's record holder, though, in the hammer with a 179-8.

Besides Thoennissen, the only other returning champ is John Gassmann (Olney) who won the 5K last year but has failed to place as an individual in any meets this spring.

"Obviously there are a lot of ifs, ands and buts surrounding a meet of this type. There certainly wasn't much distance between us and Northern Iowa indoors plus both Western and Southwest Missouri looked good indoors and have started to close the gap," said Akers.