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Panther Sports News

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY - Charleston, IL 61920
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (Feb. 24, 1987)

CHARLESTON, IL.--Eastern Illinois University's track Panthers are the overwhelming favorite to win the AMCU-8 Conference Indoor Track Championship which will be held in EIU's Lantz Fieldhouse this weekend.

The meet starts with field events at 4:30 Friday (Feb. 27) followed by running events at 7 p.m. There will be five finals on Friday.

The shot put and triple jump start at Noon Saturday (Feb. 28) with the first track event at 1 p.m.

The Panthers are picked to win the meet by four of the five coaches from participating schools. Northern Iowa, which has edged out EIU for the title the three previous years, is a solid second followed by Western Illinois, Southwest Missouri and Cleveland State.

"I think we'll win it," said EIU Coach NEIL MOORE. "I'd be lying if I thought Northern Iowa was the favorite."

Moore's confidence is based on three returning AMCU indoor champions led by last year's conference 'Athlete of the Year' JIM MATON (SHELBYVILLE), who has been victorious in at least one middle distance event at each meet this winter.

His best event is the 1000 run where he has set a school record 2:08.6, which also qualifies for the NCAA national meet. He also has won 880 and mile events and anchors the EIU record setting two-mile relay.

MATON also has the conference's best reported times in the 600, 880, 1000 and mile runs.

The other two returning champs are IAN ISAACS (AURORA-WEST), who won the 440, and DAN MATAS (OAK PARK-RIVER FOREST), first in the shotput.

"We're as ready as we'll ever be. Competing at home may be a slight advantage but by now we've seen enough times and distances to know where

most of the points are so it's up to the kids to determine the outcome," Moore said.

PHIL MATON (SHELBYVILLE), Jim's brother, is also a middle distance standout who will score points. JEFF GENNARELLI (BERWYN-MORTON WEST), junior weightman, should score in the 35 lb. weight and shot put.

MIKE HAMMAN (GIRARD), just a freshman, has the best reported height (6-11) in the high jump. LONNY VICKERY (BRADLEY-BOURBONNAIS), who has cleared 16-0 feet in the pole vault, leads the league in that event.

"We have good depth. After the scratches are reported Wednesday, we'll have an opportunity to maybe place a person in an event where they might pick up an extra point or two," Moore explained.

In all, 17 former AMCU-8 individual champions, including those from the outdoor season, are on winter rosters. Eight indoor league record holders will also be returning.