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Panther Sports News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL -- (January 15, 1986) -- Eastern Illinois University's men's track and field team may be without its spark from the past few years, but the Panthers are still loaded.

Eastern opens its season Saturday at 1 p.m. in Lantz Fieldhouse in a quadrangular meet against Parkland CC, Southeast Missouri and Southwest Missouri without sprinting extrodinaire Claude Magee but with the "Cannon Corps" still intact.

Magee played a prime role last spring as the Panthers captured the Mid-Continent Conference outdoor title with three first-place efforts. But he wasn't the only reason Eastern compiled 181 points to Western Illinois' 172 and Northern Iowa's 170.

The Cannon Corps also played a significant part in Eastern's league championship. Jim Lail (Dolton-Thornridge) took top honors in the discus with a conference-record throw of 179-0, was second in the javelin, third in the shot put and fifth in the hammer. Larry Priebe (Palos Hills-Stagg) won the javelin with an effort of 208-8. Both return this season as seniors.

Lail came back from knee surgery in 1984 with a strenuous rehabilitation program. He holds the school indoor shot put record at 58-2½ and is considered by head coach Neil Moore as the leader of the Cannon Corps.

"Hopefully, Jim will add to his indoor shot put record and possibly qualify for the NCAA Division I national meet," Moore said.

Priebe made a 35-foot improvement last season in the javelin for a season-best 209-7. Despite the javelin being only an outdoor event, Priebe was 11th on the indoor-outdoor team scoring list with 37 points. Lail was third with 118.

Other members of the Cannon Corps are senior Larry Thoennissen (Morton), senior Bob Mazanke (Palos Hills-Stagg), junior Dan Matas (Oak Park-River Forest) and sophomora Jeff Gennarelli (Berwyn-Morton West).

Thoennissen took top honors last spring at the indoor conference meet in the 35-pound weight throw with a record toss of 57-0 3/4. He also set a school outdoor record in the shot put last year at 57-2 and in the hammer at 181-5. Thoennissen was second on the scoring list with 132 points to Magee's 200.5.

"Larry is the most improved member of the Cannon Corps," said Moore, noting Thoennissen's progress from 48-11 as a freshman shot putter. "Larry is the most intense competitor I have ever coached."

Mazanke was runner-up at the outdoor conference meet in the discus. He ranks fourth at 167-6 on the all-time school list and holds the freshman record in the discus at 162-6.

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Matas missed last season because of injury but hopes to return to the form that made him "one of the top weightman to ever attend Eastern Illinois," Moore said. Matas is third on the all-time list in the shot put at 54-3 3/4 indoors and third at 56-5 1/4 outdoors. Moore describes Matas as "the gunpowder of the Cannon Corps."

Gennarelli set a freshman record for the shot put last spring with a throw of 52-1 1/2 outdoors, good enough for eighth on the all-time list. He was 17th on the scoring list.

The Panthers are also strong in the pole vault with senior Roxy Wood (Pekin) and in the high jump with Tom Getz (Bartonville-Limestone). Wood holds the outdoor record at 16-0 1/4 and is fourth in the indoor vault at 15-6 1/4. He was 14th on the scoring list last year. Getz ranks fifth indoors at 6-8 and outdoors at 6-6. He was 10th in scoring a year ago.

On the track, the Panthers should score plenty of points. Sophomore Jim Maton (Shelbyville) and junior Scot Adamson (Moweaqua) are two reasons.

Maton won the indoor conference 880 in 1:54.59 last year and was second in the outdoor meet in 1:51.96. He was fourth in scoring with 99.25 points.

"Jim is capable of breaking Ken Jacobi's fine 800 record of 1:49.7," Moore said. Jacobi set the school mark in 1971, and the record is the second oldest on the outdoor list.

Adamson ranks sixth on the EIU all-time list in the 400 hurdles at 53.04. He was the conference runner-up in that event last spring and has run legs on strong mile-relay squads. Adamson was the team's fifth-leading scorer with 70.5 points.

In sophomore twin brothers Dan and Don Johnson (Terre Haute, IN-South), the Panthers have two solid middle-distance runners. Dan Johnson had a season best of 1:58.4 in the 800 last year, while Don Johnson was a member of a mile-relay team that ran 3:22.3. Dan Johnson was 13th in team scoring with 35 1/2 points.

Senior Dan Newman (Elmhurst-York) took fourth place at the outdoor conference meet in the steeplechase with a time of 9:31. He volunteered for the event after running long distance most of the season.

"I really feel that the steeplechase is Dan's best event," said Moore. "It holds the greatest potential for him this year."

Sophomore Mark Heise (Charleston) was sixth at the outdoor conference meet in the 400 hurdles in 55.26. His time of 1:12.8 for the 600 ranks 11th on the all-time list.