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Panther Sports News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL (January 15, 1986)--If Eastern Illinois University's women's

track and field squad is to have a successful season, it will be primarily because of five individuals.

Those five are junior middle-distance runners Janine Jarris (St. Charles) and Lauren Lynch (Elmhurst-York), junior throwers Valeta Strickland (Chicago-South Shore) and Debbie Zubik (Calumet City-South Holland Thornwood) and sophomore sprinter Tracy Olawumi (Blue Island-Eisenhower).

"As those five people go, so goes Eastern Illinois University," said head coach John Craft, whose team opens at 2 p.m. Saturday in a triangular meet against Indiana State and Southeast Missouri in Lantz Fieldhouse. "Those five are our leaders, and they will carry the bulk of the load. If they get the job done, we will have a fine squad."

Jarris set indoor school records for 880 yards at 2:14.5 and for 800 meters at 2:16.3 a year ago. She could lower those marks this season after a good cross country season.

"J. J. (Jarris) is coming off her best cross country season, timewise, in her career," said Craft. "She was running exceptionally well until she sustained a bruise under her foot."

Jarris missed the Gateway Collegiate Athletic Conference meet last fall because of the injury but still managed to run a personal best of 18:09 for 5,000 meters. She appears to be over the injury.

"She has really got an excellent attitude about work," said Craft. "She has paid the price and is really excited about track."

Lynch proved she could run the 800 meter, too, as she established a school outdoor record last spring of 2:10.84. She set the record after being injured during the indoor season.

"That tells you what kind of an athlete she is," Craft said. "She has a never-say-die type of attitude. She's a good athlete."

Lynch should see action in events ranging from the 4 x 200 relay to the 1,000. She will anchor the 4 x 800 relay team.

Strickland set a pair of shot put records last spring with throws of 47-11 3/4 indoors and 46-11 3/4 outdoors. Zubik formerly held the school indoor mark at 43-8 and had a personal best of 45-7 1/4 last year.

"Valeta has really worked herself into being a good athlete," Craft said of Strickland. "She has paid the price. She is tremendously strong and very quick and agile for a young woman of her size. I'm expecting good things from her."

"Debbie has got a desire to win every time she steps on the track," Craft said of Zubik. "I think our strength is going to come from the weights. Next is our relay teams."

A key performer on those relay teams should be Olawumi. Last spring, she lowered the school indoor record for 400 meters to 58.1. She should be a steady anchor leg for the 4 x 400 relay squad.

"She was rather unheralded out of high school," Craft said, "but she has got a lot of talent. She can run anything from the 200 to the 800. She has tremendous stamina and poise. I haven't seen her tire in a workout yet."

Freshmen who may contribute right away include Kristi Baum (Belleville-O'Fallon), Patty Frigo (Lansing-Thornton Fractional South) and Marcy Novak (Champaign-Mahomet Seymour).

Baum won the Class AA discus title last spring, and Frigo was second in the Class AA high jump. Novak was a member of Mahomet Seymour's two-time Class A champion mile-relay team.