

KANSAS TRACK

CONFERENCE TIME-- Kansas will travel to Ames, Iowa this weekend for the annual Big Eight Conference Outdoor. The meet will be held in conjunction with the women's conference affair for the first time this year. Field events will kick things off for the Jayhawks Friday at 1:30 p.m., and festivities on the track will start at 3 p.m. On Saturday, field events will start at 11 a.m. with track events to follow at 1 p.m.

TRADITION, TRADITION-- Kansas' Big Eight track success is unparalleled. The Jayhawks have won 13 of the past 14 conference outdoor titles. Only Oklahoma's 1978 victory has interrupted the string.

TIMMONS' RECORD-- Now in the 16th year of his illustrious coaching career at Kansas, Bob Timmons will be shooting for his 14th outdoor crown. His first year, 1966, and 1978 have been the only years he has not won it. He has also won 11 conference indoor titles and two conference cross country crowns to give him an amazing 26 Big Eight titles in 47 attempts.

OUTDOORS TO DATE -- It hasn't been one of the Jayhawks' more successful outdoor campaigns so far. After starting the season with a four-point dual road win over Arizona, KU hasn't fared well the last two times out in team competition. The Jayhawks lost by a wide margin in a dual at Oregon and finished second behind Kansas State two weeks ago at the Sunflower Classic.

INJURIES, INJURIES -- KU's performances on the track this year have nearly been overshadowed by the hospital reports. Here's a brief recap: discus thrower Matt Friedeman--no injury, red-shirting this season; pole vaulter Jeff Buckingham--lower back injury, has been out entire season; shot put and discus thrower Clint Johnson--missed almost entire outdoor season with mononucleosis; intermediate hurdler Mark Rau--out entire outdoor season with stress fracture; sprinter Anthony Polk--out since Kansas Relays with hamstring, should be ready; sprinter Deon Hogan--out since Kansas Relays with quadracep, should be ready; triple jumper Sanya Owolabi--out since Oregon dual with hamstring, questionable; long jumper Warren Wilhoite--slowed by back injury, should be ready.

TIMMONS ON THE INJURIES-- "It's been frustrating, but it's getting better. We've been working our injured guys out in the swimming pool trying to get them ready.

"Because we've had so many injuries, we've never gotten any momentum going. We just got by at the conference indoor, and we've basically been struggling ever since. But I've been seeing the momentum coming back in practice. It seems like every day a different guy starts coming around,"

DIFFERENT FORECAST -- Largely because of KU's injury problems and sub-par outdoor season performance, the Jayhawks are not the overwhelming favorites entering the meet as they have been in past years. In a pre-meet coaches' poll, Iowa State was given the nod, gathering 46 points, while KU was close behind with 45. Nebraska, Oklahoma State and Kansas State were bunched tightly in the race for third place in the poll.

TIMMONS ON THE FORECAST -- "I think it's very justified that Iowa State enters as the favorite because their team has made great strides this year. I think there are a number of other teams that will make strong bids for the championship. We found out during the indoor season how tough Nebraska is, and we've known from the start of the season that Kansas State is a team filled with balance and quality. And Oklahoma and Oklahoma State will definitely be up at the top battling it out."

TIMMONS ON THE MEET -- "Every point is vital because we've got some ground to make up. In past years, it's been a case of maintaining our high ranking. Now we've got to climb and scramble.

"I've got a good feeling about this team and about this meet. We've got a lot of competitors on this team who are facing a big challenge, and I've got confidence in them. There's been too much momentum established through the years with the outdoor championship and Kansas for us not to give it our best effort. I expect a lot of season bests from our athletes."

RETURNING -- Kansas returns 68 individual points from the 150 it compiled in winning last year's outdoor by a whopping 71 points at Manhattan. In addition, one-quarter of the second-place 440-relay team is back and three-quarters of the winning

mile relay team is back. The Jayhawks return three conference champions: Paul Schultz in the steeplechase, Deon Hogan in the 400 meters and Joel Light in the high jump. Friedeman and Buckingham also titlists. Other places from last year back for KU are: Mike Morse (2nd, javelin); Mike Ricks (2nd, 400); Sanya Owolabi (2nd, triple jump); Mark Hanson (2nd, long jump); Paul Malott (5th, steeplechase); Leonard Martin (5th, 800); Rodney Bullock (6th, 400); Owen Buckley (6th, pole vault).

BRIEFLY -- Kansas' struggles of late can easily be seen with a quick check of the conference ranking list entering the outdoor. The Jayhawks do not have a league-leading mark in any one event. Here's a brief outlook of how KU shapes up in each area:

Sprints -- Hogan and Ricks are threats to win the 400 and with Bullock, KU hopes to place all three in the top six for the second straight year. Ricks has been the hottest Jayhawk of late and he figures prominently in the 200. KU is also hoping for some points from Polk in the 100 as well as 200.

Middle distance and distance -- The Jayhawks will rely heavily here on Schultz who has the team's best times in the steeplechase, 5,000 and 10,000. Schultz has his best shot in the steeple, where he is the defending champion. Others KU is hoping to get points from are Luder in the 1,500 and Gundy and Malott in the steeple.

Hurdles -- No high hopes here, but KU may garner some points from Greg Jones in the high hurdles and Leaks and Hawk in the intermediates. Leaks has been coming on strong of late.

Relays -- Not the strong point it has been in years past for the Jayhawks. Not a great hope in the 440 because KU has run the race only once this year. The mile unit has a good chance to repeat its title with quarter-mile specialists Hogan, Ricks and Bullock. The key may be the fourth person on the team.

Jumps -- KU's strongest area. The Jayhawks have legitimate shots at conference championships with Hanson and Wilhoite in the long jump, Light and Graham in the high jump, Buckingham in the pole vault and a healthy Owolabi in the triple jump. KU's depth in this area is also good. Capable of adding points are Graham and Titus in the triple jump, Titus in the high jump, and Howard, Malley and Buckley in the pole vault.

Weight events -- Morse is the best shot here in the javelin, trying to repeat his second-place finish of last year. Paulsen may have a shot at some points in the discus.

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