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Sports

Aztecs provide the thrills in track meet

by Karen daSilva
Daily Aztec sportswriter

Usually the big names capture the spotlight and the crowd's attention.

So when the promoters of the Fifth Annual Budweiser/Aztec Invitational wanted to advertise the first major outdoor track and field meet of the season, they publicized the big names. Like two-time Olympic high jumper Dwight Stones.

But it wasn't any big name that captured the crowd's attention and had them standing on their feet cheering Saturday at SDSU's Choc Sportsman Track. It was an old, familiar name — SDSU itself.

In the last running events of the day, the women's and men's 1,600-meter relays, SDSU had the crowd standing on their feet in excitement as both races went down to the final 100 yards.

First it was the Aztec women. Competing against one of the fastest 1,600-meter relay teams in the nation, Cal State Los Angeles, SDSU's women pulled a double victory. The Aztec women not only upset Cal State Los Angeles, but they qualified for the NCAA finals with a winning time of 3:39.12.

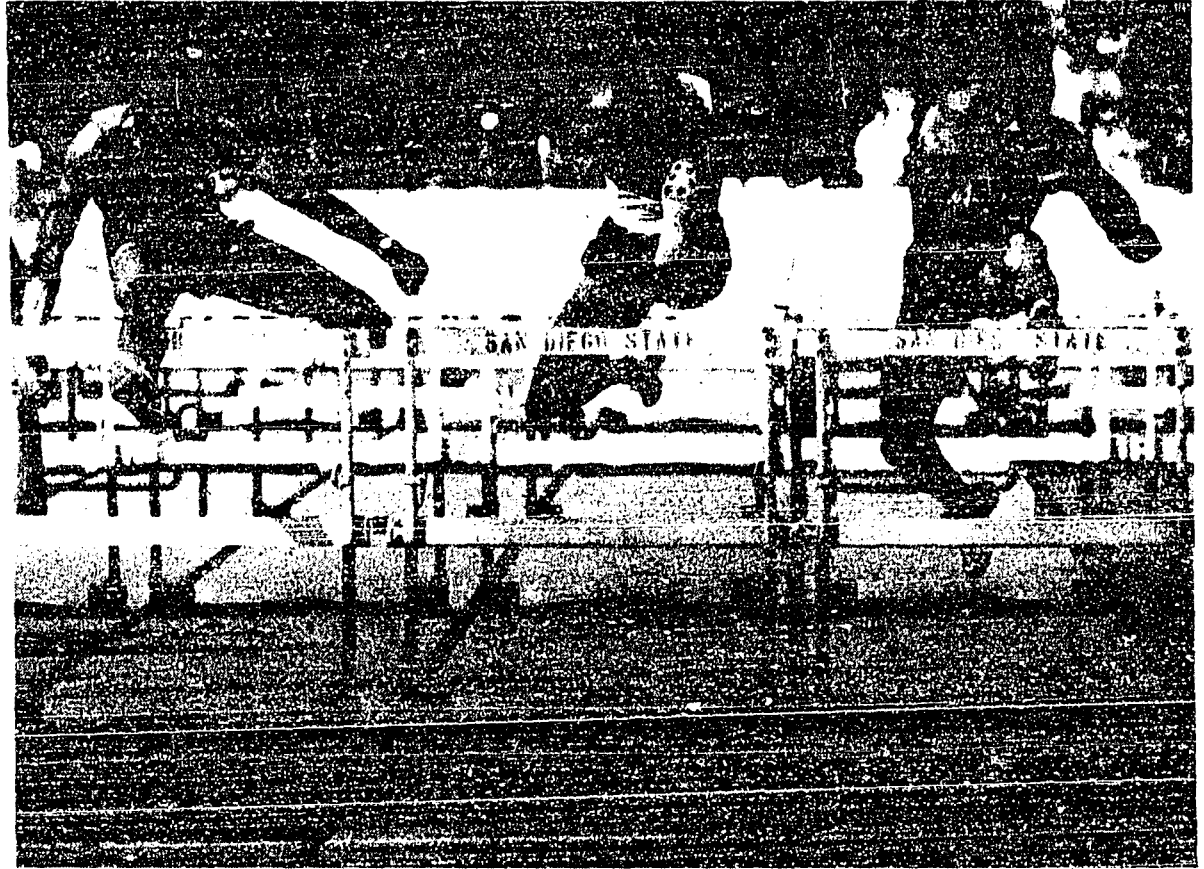
"Terrific," Fred LaPlante, SDSU's women's track and field coach and co-meet director, said. "I didn't expect to win."

Going into the second leg of the race, SDSU's women trailed by 20 yards in third place. But an unofficial split of 52.1 by Renee Chambers moved the Aztecs into first.

Having dropped down to second behind California going into the final leg, the race was now in the hands of SDSU's Latanya Sheffield who, last week against Cal State Northridge and Cal Poly Pomona, broke her own school record in the 400 meters.

Sheffield moved up on the outside with Cal State Los Angeles' Denean Howard, No. 4 in the world last year in the 400 meters, one step behind. Going

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Daily Aztec photo by Manuel Cenicrns

IN STEP—Tonie Campbell, Sam Turner and Milan Stewart fly across the 110-meter high hurdles in Saturday's Aztec Invitational track meet. Campbell won the race in a meet record 13.61 seconds despite running into the wind.



Daily Aztec photo by Manuel Cenicerós

DYNAMITE DWIGHT—Shown clearing the high jump bar in Saturday's Budweiser/Aztec Invitational track meet is Dwight Stones. Competing for the Tiger Track Club, Stones won the high jump at a mediocre 7-2. Reynaldo Brown cleared the same height, but Stones had fewer misses.

Stones jumps 7-2, victorious anyway

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into the last curve, running one-two, it looked like Howard was pulling away from Sheffield. But Sheffield hung onto Howard and in the final curve accelerated and broke away from Howard to win the race for the Aztecs. Sheffield was unofficially timed at 52.8.

Saturday's race was the first time Sheffield had beaten Dencan Howard.

"I usually fatigue around the curve, but didn't this time," Sheffield said.

"I felt really well (going around the final curve). I didn't panic."

The Aztec men weren't about to let the women hold the spotlight alone, though.

"The mile relay was the highlight for me," Dixon Farmer, SDSU's men's track and field coach and co-meet director, said.

Running in his first race since USC two weeks ago, where he suffered a bad hamstring strain, anchorman Chris Blaylock moved the Aztecs up from second to first in the final straightaway of the 1,600-meter relay. The winning time was 3:09.17. Arizona State was second in 3:10.26.

"I was real pleased (with Blaylock)," Farmer said. "Chris didn't over-run. He used his head."

Farmer also said a key to the race was running with three fresh people. Willie Atterbery, Keith James and Blaylock had not run previously in the meet. Mike Adkins ran the other leg. Aztec Lori Smith also had a good day defending her title in the 100-meter hurdles and running the anchor leg on SDSU's first-place 400-meter relay team.

Smith was impressive in the 100 hurdles as she led all the way over Janet Yarbrough, No. 10 in the nation, from Cal Poly Track Club. Smith was timed at 13.54 to Yarbrough's second-place 13.82.

Although not reaching the height he did last year at the Aztec Invitational when capturing the high jump title, Dwight Stones succeeded in defending his championship.

Stones won the event with a mark of 7-2. Reynaldo Brown, competing unattached, also reached 7-2, but placed second because of more misses.