

Aggies heat up Gilliam with strong performances in Reveille Invitational

COLLEGE STATION – A total of 13 victories and stellar performances highlighted the Aggie effort during the Texas A&M Reveille Invitational in front of 1,174 fans who enjoyed a cozy Gilliam Indoor Track Stadium on very cold Saturday afternoon.

Among the wins supplied by the Aggies, four were accompanied by a 1-2-3 A&M sweep of the event. The women's 60 meters even had Aggie sprinters claiming the first five places. In four other events A&M finished as the top collegian against post-collegiate competitors.

"This is just like taking final exams, you have to see where you are," noted Texas A&M head coach Pat Henry. "This group did very well tonight and I especially feel good about a number of people in this group. This ended up being a very good competition for us."

Olivia Ekponé recorded one of the highlight performances on the day. She captured the 200 meters in 23.72 over a 23.74 from teammate Ashton Purvis and then rallied A&M's 4x400 relay from third to first with a 52.7 anchor split.

"I love running against Ashton since she's such a great competitor," said Ekponé. "For me to have lane 6 I just wanted to get out strong and finish my race. We've been doing a lot of finishing and getting out strong in practice, so for me to apply that here today in a meet setting was great."

"The relay was really exciting. Just to be out there wearing an A&M uniform I was really excited. I just made sure I did what I was supposed to do and passed the girls at the right moment so it wouldn't haunt me later in the race. I wasn't expecting a split like that right now."

The Aggies finished 1-2 in the relay with the first squad posting a 3:41.11 over the 3:42.52 from the second crew of A&M sprinters while Houston (3:43.27) and TCU (3:44.89) finished third and fourth. Running on the winning relay were Kamaria Brown (54.5), Ashley Collier (56.6), LaKeshia Jelks (57.3) and Ekponé (52.7). The runner-up relay consisted of Shamier Little (55.7), Aliese Hyde (57.1), Jessica Laseak (56.0) and Ibukun Mayungbe (53.7).

Carlyle Roudette (46.4) ran the anchor leg of the men's 4x400 relay that posted a winning time of 3:07.14 over TCU's 3:08.61 and just missed the meet record of 3:06.82 set by the Aggies last December. Greg Coleman (47.8) led off the effort for A&M and was followed by Aldrich Bailey, Jr. (46.5) and Deon Lendore (46.5).

LaQue Moen-Davis sped to a personal best of 8.49 to win the 60 hurdles, the first event contested on the track, as she improved on her best of 8.53 from last season. In the long jump a mark of 20-6.25 (6.25) opened her campaign and it held up as the leading mark until the final round when she was passed by a quarter of an inch.

"It's exciting to be back on the track," noted Moen-Davis. "I've been working on getting out of the blocks better in the hurdles so it was exciting to come and get a win in my first race this season. The start still isn't where I want it to be, but it's definitely better than it was before. I'm excited to see where this will go throughout this season."

Wayne Davis II displayed a stellar early season form in running 7.85 to win the 60-meter hurdles with teammate Kenneth Minkah placing third with an 8.11 clocking.

"I was pleased to open with a time like that, I know I'm on the right track," said Davis. "The goal is to be undefeated so this is one step in that process. The fall training has been going great. This is my last year and I need to make a mark."

The weight throw produced a pair of monster efforts by Casey Strong (66-2.5) and Brea Garrett (64-10.5). Each won their respective event with marks that were the second best performances all-time at A&M only bettered by their own school records. Strong led an Aggie 1-2-3 sweep as Ben Skrla (60-1) and Austin Cook (58-8) moved to No. 3 and No. 4 on the A&M all-time list with their marks.

Brittany Wooten improved her best in the pole vault, clearing a height of 12-7.5 for second place as she move to No. 4 on the A&M all-time list. Houston's Karley King defended her title with a 13-7.25 mark and bettered the meet record she set last season. In the men's vault A&M's Chase Wolfe won with his opening height of 16-6 and then had three attempts at 17-6.

The first through fifth-place finish for the Aggie women in the 60 meters had Jennifer Madu leading the way with a 7.35 clocking followed by frosh Aaliyah Brown posting a 7.36 (equal No. 8 on the A&M all-time list). Collier ran 7.38 for third with Kamaria Brown (7.45) and India Daniels (7.49) following.

Shavez Hart led the sweep of the men's 200 with a winning time of 21.03, the No. 11 mark all-time at A&M, as Michael Bryan and Prezel Hardy, Jr. shared times of 21.08 in second and third.

Joining Moen-Davis in the 60 hurdles were teammates Shamier Little (third in 8.53) and Jena Hemann (eighth in 8.94). Moen-Davis challenged the meet record of 8.42 set by A&M's Natasha Ruddock in 2009.

While an expected battle from TCU's Lorraine Ugen, the defending NCAA Outdoor long jump champion, never materialized when the Horned Frog produced three fouls, post collegian Alesha Walker managed to claim the win over Moen-Davis with a sixth round mark of 20-6.5 (6.26). Walker and Moen-Davis topped the meet record of 20-2.5 (6.16) set by Ugen in 2011.

Setting personal best marks in the long jump were a trio of Aggies which included Melissa Mays (19-0.5), Jordan Wilson (18-9.75) and Haley Gooch (17-8) as they finished fourth, fifth and eighth.

Winning performances also included Devion Harris (6-8.25) in the high jump, Olabanji Asekun (24-1) in the long jump and LaKesha Jelks (2:20.35) in the 800. In addition to Moen-Davis finishing as the top collegian in the long jump, other Aggies achieving the feat included Hemann (5-6) in the high jump won by former NCAA silver medalist Krystle Schade (5-11.5), Cameron Cardwell (1:55.65) in the 800 and Dylan Williams (15:18.56) in the 5,000 meters.

Garrett added a runner-up effort in the women's shot put as she produced a mark of 51-3.5 while multi-eventer Hemann hit a mark of 42-8 for fourth. The men's shot put had Jeff Bartlett placing third with a toss of 53-3. Aaron Murray (4:22.06) and Josh Hernandez (4:22.08) had a close battle in the mile as they finished third and fourth. Aliese Hyde (5:10.46) finished sixth as the top Aggie in the women's mile.