

Aggies break 4x400 relay collegiate record to win NCAA Indoor title

FAYETTEVILLE – Texas A&M men's 4x400 relay achieved its second collegiate record as they won the NCAA Indoor championship in a blazing 3:02.86, the fourth fastest time ever recorded in the world, to close out the meet on Saturday evening at the Randal Tyson Track Center.

Texas A&M men scored 33 points to place fourth in team scoring, while the women finished tied for 15th place with 14 points.

"You kind of get on a high right here at the end because we won the relay and ran faster than anyone has ever run," said Texas A&M head coach Pat Henry. "But there are some things that happened before the relay that gave us the opportunity to finish among the top four on the men's side. Across the board on the men's side I think we left 10 points out there that we should have had.

"It's hard for us to get on the track right now on the women's side. We are a little bit thin and we need to figure out how to get some things going. We don't look like us right now. We need to make some changes to look like Texas A&M."

Oregon won the men's team title with 74 points with Florida runner-up at 50. Arkansas finished third with 39 points with the Aggies in fourth at 33. Rounding out the top 10 teams were Texas Tech (31), Texas (25), LSU & TCU (19), along with Akron, Iowa State and USC tied for ninth with 16 points.

Arkansas scored 63 points to win the women's team title over Oregon's 46 ½ with Georgia in third at 37. The rest of the top 10 included Florida (36), Kentucky (35), Texas (33), Baylor (27), and LSU & Southern Illinois tied for ninth with 18 points.

The A&M relay foursome of Gregory Coleman (46.52), Bralon Taplin (45.12), Shavez Hart (45.89) and Deon Lendore (45.33) cruised to victory as they toppled the collegiate record of 3:03.20 that the Aggies set in winning the 2014 SEC title. It's the first NCAA Indoor title for A&M since winning consecutive titles in 2010 and 2011.

"I really didn't think we were running that fast," stated Henry. "We were kind of bunched up on a couple of legs and had a little bit of bumping. They guys just put it out there. To finish the meet and run faster than anybody has ever run, except for the United States team in the history of our sport, that says a lot about this group of young men."

Only three United States relay teams are better than the time recorded by the Aggies. An U.S. all-star team ran in Fayetteville in 2006 and posted a 3:01.96 while two United States national teams competing at the World Indoor Championships clocked 3:02.13 (2014) and 3:02.83 (1999).

Texas A&M becomes the first collegiate team to break 3:03 on a banked 200m track. The only other sub-3:03 run by a school was when SMU ran 3:02.95 at altitude on an oversized track in Flagstaff, Arizona.

"As the race unfolded, I realized we were running very fast," stated Lendore. "I wasn't about to get walked by anyone. Everybody put their heart out there, so I wanted to run as hard as I could. We knew we could run 3:02 and it took us until the last indoor meet, but we got it when it mattered."

The Aggies also set the world leading time for the 2015 indoor season to better a 3:02.87 run by Belgium last weekend in winning the European Championship.

Running the third of three sections of the 4x400 final, Texas A&M joined Nebraska, LSU and Florida. Bumping on the third leg between the Tigers and Gators led to a shove from the LSU runner that sent the Florida runner into the infield. Florida didn't finish the race and LSU was disqualified after posting a time of 3:03.23. Nebraska ended up in second place overall with a 3:04.83.

In the open 400, Taplin (45.55) and Lendore (45.81) finished second and fourth overall after placing 1-2 in the same section. LSU's Vernon Norwood won the other section in 45.31 to claim the event.

"We wanted to finish 1-2, so we weren't happy with that race," said Taplin. "That's all I can really say."

Lendore added: "We tried to go out there and execute our own race. It didn't turn out how we wanted it. That's why we came back in the 4x400 to put it all on the line. We made a mistake so we wanted to brush it up."

Shamier Little placed fourth in the women's 400 with a 52.21 as she finished third in her section behind Courtney Okolo of Texas (51.12) and Taylor Ellis-Watson of Arkansas (51.52) while Florida's Robin Reynolds (53.14) was fourth in the section. Ashley Spencer of Texas ran 51.85 in the first section to place third.

As the race neared the midway point at 200m, Little had her foot clipped by another runner and lost her stride. That left her in fourth place for the remainder of the race until she passed Reynolds with 50m left.

A mark of 54-0 (16.46) placed Latario Collie fifth in the triple jump. His final effort went a long distance to challenge the leaders, but it was ruled a foul. Collie opened with a 53-11 $\frac{3}{4}$ (16.45), but three fouls followed and he was in fifth place amid the final three rounds.

Florida's Marquis Dendy won the triple jump at 57-0 (17.37) to complete a sweep of the jump titles after taking the long jump on Friday with a 27-2 (8.28) leap.

The 200 meters had Hart placing seventh with a 20.89 while Kamaria Brown (23.15) and Ashton Purvis (23.27) finished seventh and eighth in the women's 200m final. Baylor's Trayvon Bromell claimed the men's title in 20.19 (No. 3 all-time world and equal No. 5 performance all-time) while the women's title was claimed by Florida's Kyra Jefferson in 22.63.

Aaliyah Brown placed eighth in the women's 60 final with a clocking of 7.32. Alabama's Remona Burchell defended her title with a 7.12 victory.

The women's 4x400 relay finished 12th overall with a time of 3:38.55 with a foursome of Purvis, K. Brown, A. Brown and Little. Texas won the event with a 3:28.54 over Arkansas (3:28.70).

Jena Hemann scored 4,019 points to finish 13th in the pentathlon. A solid start had Hemann running the 60 hurdles in 8.64 while clearing 5-8 $\frac{1}{2}$ (1.74) in the high jump for 987 and 903 points, respectively, to total 1,890 after two events. At that point Hemann was 10 points ahead of her previous year's NCAA performance when she finished eighth with a school record score of 4,193.

Then a 41-10 $\frac{1}{2}$ (12.76) effort in the shot put had her scoring 711 points and moving into eighth place. In the long jump Hemann hit 17-6 $\frac{3}{4}$ (5.35) on her first attempt for 657 points, but fouled her two remaining efforts. She dropped to 12th place and a 2:24.66 (761) in the 800 meters dropped her back one spot to 12th.