



ASU THROWERS ARE SHOWING PROGRESS UNDER BRIAN OLDFIELD

Oldfield benefitting ASU

Assistant pushing Tribe's weight specialists

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Consumer endorsement usually helps sell a product, so let the weight specialists on Arkansas State University's track team speak on new assistant coach Brian Oldfield's behalf:

He's added about 20 feet on my throw in the discus. I've probably been strong enough to do it for a while, but I didn't have the technique — junior Rhonda Horn.

In the beginning, I didn't know Brian Oldfield, didn't know if the kind of technique he was teaching would help me. So I waited until the season's almost over to try it — and it works — junior Serenia Curtis.

Coach Oldfield has helped me a lot as far as my technical plans in the ring — sophomore J.R. Elliott.

He's made quite a bit of difference for us — junior Larisa Larson.

They sound like satisfied customers, which they are to some extent. Horn has provisionally qualified for the NCAA championships in the discus and Curtis is close in the shot put. Horn, Curtis and Larson have all set school records in the last two weeks. Elliott has had his personal bests lately.

Oldfield, who came to ASU last fall, hasn't been quite as satisfied with his athletes' progress. After



Rhonda Horn



Serenia Curtis



J.R. Elliott



Larisa Larson

all, he says his favorite motivational slogan is "it's about time."

"For a long time, I thought they should have been throwing better," Oldfield said Saturday, "but maybe that was me being hypercritical. We were actually throwing about this far last fall. But with Thanksgiving, Christmas, the semester break — the whole process — it took us this long to get back where we were before Thanksgiving."

For a long time, Oldfield was one of the top shot putters in the world and has a personal best of 75 feet. He held the world record for 12 years and he's still fourth on the all-time world shot put list.

He's been involved with track for 38 years and admits he's seen all the mistakes his athletes make. Oldfield's spin move has become widely popular around the world

and certainly with ASU's weight specialists.

ASU head coach Jay Flanagan thinks Oldfield's biggest impact on the Indians isn't technique, however.

"Where I think he's making a difference is in changing attitudes," Flanagan said. "There is a feeling of importance because there's someone there to work with them."

As Oldfield notes, the progress has been modest. The Indians aren't threatening any world records or NCAA automatic qualifying standards right now.

But progress has been made, enough that ASU's learning throwers are dreaming big dreams.

Horn, who is from Yukon, Okla., has provisionally qualified for the NCAAs in the discus, her best

event, with a throw of 160-1. She thinks she can threaten the automatic standard of 173-11.

"I've been throwing 175, 177 in practice," Horn said. "Hopefully next year sometime, I can get up to around 200."

Curtis, a former basketball player from West Memphis called ASU's "most explosive" thrower by Oldfield, says she's still in the

learning process after changing her style. She broke her own ASU shot put record with a toss of 46-7 Saturday and figures to be one of the event's favorites in the Sun Belt Conference Championships in a couple of weeks.

"He (Oldfield) is always telling me to turn my feet," Curtis said one day during practice last week. "In the beginning, he was on us about getting stronger and we got to where we wanted to lift every day. But then he got us out here and had us working on turning our feet doing rotation drills. He said the strength was there."

Larson, from Fort Smith, said she's learning the spin technique in the shot put. Her top event is the javelin and her toss of 132-1 Saturday broke her old record by three feet.

With Horn, Curtis and Larson ASU has three women who are strongest in different events. Elliott, a 6-foot-2, 230-pound native of Marlow, Okla., is basically ASU's only male weight specialist though junior decathlete Carl Long also throws the shot and discus.

Elliott's best marks this year are 161-6 in the discus and 47-7 in the shot. He doesn't always have to practice alone, however, not with former ASU standout David Rodely still living in town.

Elliott figures his best days are ahead in the next two years. "It's just a matter of muscle maturity and a couple of years of weight training," he said. "I think it'll be tremendous by the time I'm a junior and senior."

Flanagan hopes Elliott will have some company next year. The ASU head coach said Oldfield's presence has been helpful in recruiting.

"I think we'll get some good recruits, mainly because of Brian's name," Flanagan said. "Because of him, we've had some openings to talk to some of the top throwers in the country."

Oldfield, too, expects to have more athletes to work with next year. He'll also expect the returnees to do more.

"Next year will be a lot bigger with good recruits coming in," Oldfield said. "The intensity will grow, the squad will grow, the vision will grow."

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