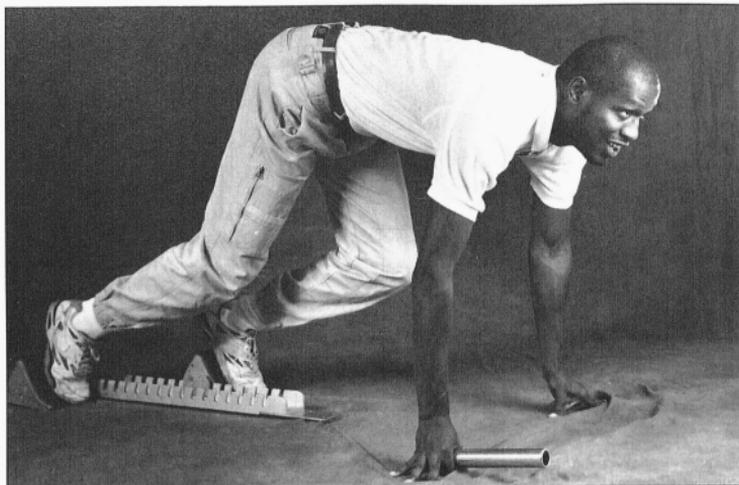


Making great

**Track
and field
coaches
prepare
their
athletes
for the
race
of life**



Item : Darroll Gatson seemed to have it all in 1985. A track star with bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Alabama, he had just received an offer to be assistant track coach at Syracuse University. But Gatson believed that his brother, Michael, a freshman at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Mich., should come first. He put his big-time career on hold and moved to Big Rapids to live with Michael for two years, "just to get him off to a good start."

Item: In 1980, Jeff Pigg, a junior at Rogersville (Mo.) High School, was distressed to learn that his school was too small to field a cross country team. So he paid the \$28 activity fee and started his own one-man squad. Pigg trained by himself, running the hills in southwest Missouri at daybreak and after school, and as well as driving himself to area meets. That fall, he won the state cross country title.

Item: In 1979, Tony Edwards, who moved with his family to California over the summer, missed his coach and teammates at Herculaneum (Mo.) High School so much that he hopped a bus back to Missouri. The problem was, he didn't have a place to stay. So he lived in an old car in a friend's back yard for two months until he could find a couple to serve as temporary guardians. The next spring, Edwards set a school record in the discus.

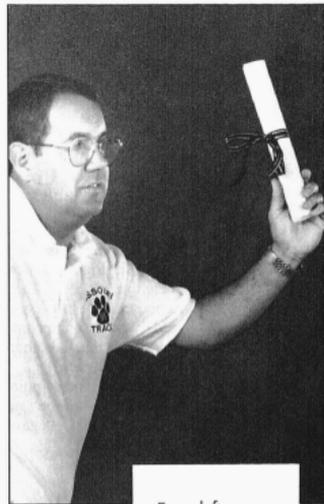
In addition to these seemingly incredible tales of dedication, Gatson, Pigg and Edwards have one thing in common: They're all assistant coaches on Dr. Rick McGuire's track and field team at MU.

"Darroll, Jeff and Tony come from dramatically different backgrounds, but they all bring an understanding of what it takes to succeed," McGuire says. "They're the right people for this program."

The coaches inspire their athletes to compete, and not just in athletics. McGuire, who has a doctorate in sport psychology, will be the first to tell you that winning the 100-meter dash or the shot put is not the most important goal for his team. "I'd rather see athletes raise their grade-point averages from 2.0 to 3.0," he says. "I'd rather see them be a success in a facet of their lives that they've struggled

S T R I D E S

Story by TERRY JORDAN
Photos by ROB HILL



with. Excellence is measured against yourself, not against others or a world record."

He also believes strongly in home-grown talent. It's no accident that of the 72 Tigers on the men's and women's track and field teams, 61 are from Missouri. "We're the state university, and I think we should focus on educating our own," McGuire says. "Given a choice between a Missouri athlete and an athlete from another state or country who may be a little faster or a little stronger, I'll take the Missouri kid every time."

Indeed, McGuire wants his athletes to succeed — in hard work and dedication, in cooperating with others, in having fun and in developing self-confidence by making their own decisions. "Those are the qualities they'll need later in life, when they

become business leaders and parents," McGuire says. "Winning the race is just gravy."

The team gets the whole meal anyway. Since McGuire came here nine years ago from the University of Virginia, MU track and field teams have produced 34 All-Americans — more than any other sport at the University in that time. The most celebrated of late is Natasha Kaiser, AB '90, who helped the U.S. women's 1,600-meter relay team win a silver medal at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona. The victory was even sweeter since McGuire was on hand as the sport psychologist for the U.S. Olympic track team.

"Certainly, Natasha has had an outstanding track career, but that's only a part of it," McGuire says, noting that Kaiser was married this summer and is examining several

career choices. "Natasha the person has been pretty successful, too."

McGuire's approach is embraced by his assistants. "When I go out to recruit, I look primarily for a nice kid — a Missouri kid — who is a good student," says Jeff Pigg, who coaches the distance runners and the cross country team. "If you recruited only on athletic ability, you'd wind up with a lot of arrogant people. That's not good for the team."

Adds Darroll Gatson, who coaches the sprinters: "My athletes know that they're here to get an education first. Track is great training, but it's only a means to an end." Tony Edwards, the throws coach, agrees. "The goal is to make them feel good about themselves."

From left,
Darroll Gatson,
Jeff Pigg, Tony
Edwards and
Dr. Rick
McGuire relay
their knowledge
and expertise
to Mizzou track
athletes.

Basketball Tigers face challenges

On paper, the 1992-93 men's basketball team may look a little weak in comparison to recent years. There are no marquee players like Doug Smith, Anthony Peeler or Derrick Chievous. Coach Norm Stewart, BS Ed '56, M Ed '60,

realizes that, and says the squad will face some challenges.

But don't you dare write them off.

"I can't help but think of last year, after Doug Smith had gone to the NBA and people predicted that we'd be way down," says Stewart, who is heading his 26th year as head coach. The Tigers came out roaring, winning their first 11 games — including victories over Arkansas, Illinois and Nevada-Las Vegas — and wound up with a 21-9 record. "For all we know, the same thing could happen this year."

The team is loaded with juniors; in fact, there's a real possibility that four juniors will start this year. Among them are 6-foot-9 forward Jevon Crudup and guards Melvin Booker, Lamont Frazier and Reggie Smith, all returning from last season. Stewart's two new signees are juniors as well: Mark Atkins, a 6-foot-5 guard and forward from Kankakee (Ill.) Community College, and Chuck Simms, a 6-foot-7 forward from Okaloosa-Walton Junior College in Niceville, Fla.

The team also may get some help from 6-foot-10 senior Chris Heller, back from an injury, and from Marlo Finner, a 6-foot-6 forward who transferred from Texas-El Paso last year. Finner, a sophomore, will become eligible at mid-season.

The sure starter is 6-foot-8 senior forward Jeff Warren, whose performance last year was affected by mononucleosis.

"We're looking for Jeff to lead this team," Stewart says. "If he and the others can stay healthy, we might surprise some people."

The home schedule includes non-conference contests with Arkansas, Memphis State, Notre Dame and Southern Illinois, and six weekend games with Big Eight teams. "It's one of the strongest home schedules I can remember," Stewart says. "The fans should love it."

The program's aim should be commended, says Dr. Richard Hessler, a medical sociologist at MU and a runner himself. "At most big universities where state support for education is low — and I would put Missouri in that class — you'll find that football and track are cutthroat programs," Hessler says. "The emphasis is on winning, and academics is a low priority. Mizzou's track program, on the other hand, is similar to what you'd find at an Ivy League school."

Team members seem comfortable with this approach as well. Reid Coffman, a middle-distance runner from St. Joseph, Mo., wants to be a teacher and coach after graduating next year. McGuire is his model.

"Instead of putting you down when you do something wrong, Coach McGuire and his staff will tell you what you could be doing right," says Coffman, an All-Big Eight selection in the 800-meter run in 1991. "Then they let you choose. It doesn't negate the person, and I've seen some people really turn things around — both in athletics and in their studies."

Coffman had a 2.8 grade-point average in high school. Now he's on the dean's honor roll in the College of Education with a 3.2 GPA.

The track and field team received special recognition from the athletic department this past spring for having seven athletes with 4.0 GPAs. In addition, 14 members of the women's team registered GPAs of 3.0 or higher. "We're a diverse team, too," McGuire says. "We have rich and poor, black and white."

Mizzou is the only university in the Big Eight without an outdoor track suitable for meets, and the team must travel to all outdoor events. McGuire doesn't complain about that, but acknowledges that it makes recruiting more difficult.

Never mind for now. The track program has stronger resources in Darroll Gatson, Jeff Pigg and Tony Edwards. And yes, Dr. Rick McGuire.

"Darroll, Jeff and Tony are committed to sharing and caring, and the kids realize it quickly," McGuire says. "They know that if they come to Missouri, we're going to spend the next four years molding them into the best people they possibly can be. That's the ultimate victory." □

1992-93 Tiger schedule

Nov. 28	Belorussia (exhibition)
Dec. 1	Slippery Rock
Dec. 5	at Texas A&M (Mizzou Sports Network)
Dec. 10	Southern Indiana
Dec. 12	Marathon Oil (exhibition)
Dec. 19	Arkansas (Mizzou Sports Network)
Dec. 23	Illinois, in St. Louis (Mizzou Sports Network)
Dec. 28-30	at Big Island Invitational in Hilo, Hawaii (Mizzou Sports Network)
Jan. 3	North Carolina-Asheville
Jan. 6	SIU-Carbondale (Mizzou Sports Network)
Jan. 9	at Colorado (Raycom)
Jan. 11	at Nevada-Las Vegas (ESPN)
Jan. 16	Iowa State (Prime Sports)
Jan. 18	Coastal Carolina
Jan. 21	Memphis State (ESPN)
Jan. 24	Oklahoma State (ABC)
Jan. 27	Notre Dame (Mizzou Sports Network)
Jan. 30	at Nebraska (Raycom)
Feb. 1	at Kansas (ESPN)
Feb. 3	Cal State-Northridge
Feb. 8	Kansas State (ESPN)
Feb. 10	at Oklahoma (Mizzou Sports Network)
Feb. 13	Kansas (Raycom)
Feb. 17	at Iowa State (Mizzou Sports Network)
Feb. 21	Nebraska (Raycom)
Feb. 24	at Oklahoma State (Prime Sports)
Feb. 27	Oklahoma (Raycom)
March 2	at Kansas State (Mizzou Sports Network)
March 6	Colorado (Raycom)
March 12-14	Big Eight Tournament in Kansas City