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Nine South Plains College Track and Field Athletes Sign Scholarships

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LEVELLAND, Texas – Nine South Plains College track and field athletes announced their intentions to continue their academic and athletic careers at various institutions around the country today during a small ceremony inside the Texan Dome. The athletes have combined to win eight NJCAA national championships and 24 all-American certificates. It is likely those numbers will grow with the NJCAA outdoor championships less than one week away.

Perhaps one of the greatest throwers in NJCAA history, Kelly Close, will be attending Texas Tech University next fall. Close is a three-time all-American and NJCAA champion and also owns the NJCAA indoor record in the shot put. Close currently leads the NJCAA in the shot put and discus and ranks second in the hammer throw.

“I chose Texas Tech because it is a great school with a very good throwing program. I feel I can go there and continue to improve my skills,” Close said.

“Kelly Close is the premier thrower in the NJCAA,” head coach Wes Kittley stated. “I don’t think there is a girl out there that can match what she can do, so we are thrilled to have her in our program. Her potential is endless.”

Dellon Williams will be joining Close at Texas Tech when he joins the Red Raiders jump corps in August. Williams, who leads the NJCAA in the long jump, will add depth to a group that includes the current NCAA leader in the long jump.

“Dellon and Kelly are both phenomenal athletes and will improve their teams dramatically,” SPC head coach Chris Beene said. “They are impact kids who can score in the Big 12 as well as the NCAA meet.”

Louisiana State University snagged the defending NJCAA champion in the triple jump when they signed Kyron Blaise. Blaise is the favorite to defend his title as his best jump of 53-05.50 leads all competitors by 10-inches. He also ranks third in the long jump. Blaise said of all the schools that were recruiting him he chose LSU because he feels it is the program that will take him to the next level.

Defending NJCAA javelin champion and three-time all-American Colleen Felix will take her skills to the University of Georgia. She leads all NJCAA competitors in the javelin throw, ranks third in the long jump and also ranks 16th and 11th in the high jump and long jump, respectively. In addition to her championship in the javelin at the 2009 NJCAA



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outdoor championship, Felix also finished second in the heptathlon competition.

Three-time NJCAA champion Shakeeri Cole will join teammate Shawna Anderson at the University of Oklahoma next season. Cole has won NJCAA titles in the indoor 600, indoor 800 and outdoor 800 during the 2009 season and will enter the 2010 championships with the third fastest time in the two-lap race.

Anderson, meanwhile, narrowly missed the NJCAA championship in the 100 meter dash last season when she settled for the runner-up position and also helped the Lady Texan 4x100 meter relay to second place.

Tallam Kipruto and Anthony Pequeno will remain teammates and hope they can help lead Lamar University to similar success the Texan cross country squad has seen during their tenure at SPC. In 2008 the duo both earned all-American accolades after leading the Texans to a second place finish in the NJCAA cross country meet and then followed that up with the NJCAA championship in the half-marathon competition.

Both earned all-American honors again in 2009 when they helped the Texans earn fourth at the NJCAA cross country meet and then another NJCAA championship in the 2009 half-marathon.

Daniel Rodriguez will move south to San Antonio when he reports to the University of Texas at San Antonio where he will help lead the Roadrunners back to the top of the Southland Conference, a position they last garnered in 2008. Rodriguez was recently honored as the Most Improved track and field athlete at the SPC Sports Awards Picnic in April and currently ranks fourth in the shot put and sixth in the discus entering the NJCAA championships May 20-22.

“We are excited for all these kids because when we bring them in here this is the goal,” Beene said. “Every place they have chosen we feel really good about. They are really good programs, not only track and field, but educationally as well.”