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Colby Community College men's track coach James Ortiz competed in the 400-meter run Saturday at the Alex Francis Classic in Hays. This was his first race since his accident in 2006.

Trojans track coach runs at meet in Hays

By Jerry Briggs
San Antonio Express-News

HAYS – Uvalde, Texas, native James Ortiz was always a dreamer. He never quit on himself, even though few would have blamed him if he did.

Six years after losing his lower right leg in a bicycle accident, his perseverance as an athlete has paid off with a compelling prize.

Ortiz qualified Saturday to compete in the U.S. Paralympic Trials in track and field after running a 400-meter race in 58.36 seconds at the Alex Francis Classic here.

Running in his first meet since his injury in 2006, the former middle distance standout at Texas State University put on a show he will always remember.

He needed to run 70.04 seconds to earn a spot in the trials, and he did it easily, sprinting around the oval with the aid of a two-week-old prosthesis in a heat against able-bodied college athletes.

"The thing I learned today, I gained a whole new appreciation

for amputees running," said Ortiz, the 27-year-old track coach at Colby Community College. "I'll be honest. I really didn't give 'em a whole lot of respect beforehand.

"I kind of looked down on the whole amputee racing in general – ignorance on my part. I learned a lot today. I really, really did."

Ortiz also learned that he might have a legitimate shot at making the U.S. team for the Paralympic Games in London.

He will need to run in the 53-second range in Indianapolis, at the U.S. trials, to have a shot at reaching the Paralympics, the major international meet for disabled athletes held every four years at the conclusion of the Olympic Games.

Ortiz said earlier this week he wanted to run 67 seconds in the college meet at Fort Hays State University, an NCAA Division II school.

"I really had no expectations," Ortiz said. "If I would have run a 65, I probably would have felt the same way. Again, I was igno-

rant coming into it. I really didn't know how hard it was going to be. I am happy with 58, I didn't see myself running that."

Ortiz was a track standout at Uvalde High School. He set the Texas state record in the 1,500 meters as a junior at Texas State University in San Marcos.

Before arriving in Colby, he served as the head coach for the University of the Southwest Mustangs in Hobbs, N.M., for two years. Prior to that, Ortiz served as the student assistant coach for the Texas State track and field and cross country programs from 2006-07.

He graduated from Texas State-San Marcos with a Bachelor of Science in interdisciplinary studies in 2007. He is pursuing a master's degree in sports administration at East Central University of Ada, Okla.

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Kansas basketball coach unsure if this is best coaching of career

By Dave Skretta
AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS – The question has been dressed in different ways, asked by countless people in every situation imaginable: Is this the best coaching job of Kansas coach Bill Self's career?

The second-seeded Jayhawks have played a who's who of major college basketball: Duke and Kentucky, Missouri and Baylor. They beat Ohio State during the regular season, the team they'll play in the Final Four on Saturday night, and won their record eighth straight Big 12 title.

And they've done it with an All-American forward (Thomas Robinson) who hardly got off the bench last year, one of the nation's most dynamic guards (Tyshawn Taylor) whose career has taken more plot twists than a telenovela, and one of the best shot-blockers in school history (Jeff Withey) who averaged all of 6.2 minutes per game last season.

It was such a mish-mash of talent that even Self tried to temper expectations of a fan base that considers anything less than a trip to the Final Four to be just another year.

"When we started (the season), I think the reality was, 'I hope we're good enough to get in,'" Self said. "The players that we thought these guys could become, they've become."

Does that mean Self has done the finest coaching job of his career?

Assistant coach headed to Tulsa

By Dave Skretta
AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS – Danny Manning, the Kansas assistant and former star for the Jayhawks, has agreed to coach the Tulsa men's basketball team.

Tulsa announced the hire this morning. The 46-year-old Manning is in New Orleans, where Kansas will play Ohio State in the NCAA tournament semifinals Saturday night. He won't join the Golden Hurricane until next week.

Manning has spent nine years on the Kansas staff and has been a full-time assistant since 2007. He won national championships as a player (1988) and assistant (2008).

The school's all-time leading scorer and rebounder takes over for Doug Wojcik, who was fired by Tulsa after failing to make the NCAA tournament in six seasons.

He's still not biting on that one.

"I don't know that you should rate," Self said earlier this week, before the team departed for New Orleans. "I'll say this: This has been one of the easier coaching jobs we've had because it's been easy to get guys to buy in and be exactly what we want them to be."

So if Self isn't willing to rate his teams, perhaps his players will take the bait.

Connor Teahan is a good place to start. The fifth-year senior redshirted last season so that

he could play more minutes in his final year.

That means he's the lone player left from the 2008 team that cut down the nets for the school's fifth national championship.

"I'm impressed by his coaching performances every year. He does a great job regardless of the team," said Teahan.

Most people believe the Jayhawks of the past couple seasons were far more talented.

Two years ago it was Sherron Collins and Xavier Henry getting the attention, and last year it was the Morris twins, Marcus and Markieff, along with freshman guard Josh Selby. But despite all that firepower, the Jayhawks headed home early come March.

"He took a team a lot of people didn't think would be – let alone in the Final Four – to the top of their conference. To be able to do that says a lot," said Taylor, a four-year starter. Taylor said this season has reminded him of his freshman year, when Kansas lost several stars from its title team.

Expectations were a bit lower, yet the Jayhawks rallied around several former role players to win 27 games and reach the second weekend of the NCAA tournament.

Even though Self appears unwilling to admit it, his coaching performance during this NCAA tournament – from a straight X's and O's standpoint – has been nearly flawless.

Nike sues Reebok in New York over player apparel

By Larry Neumeister
Associated Press

NEW YORK – Nike went to court Wednesday to prove that Reebok is no shoo-in to promote New York Jets quarterback Tim Tebow on apparel.

Nike Inc. claimed in a lawsuit in U.S. District Court that Reebok International Ltd. has used Tebow's name on Jets-related apparel without permission since it was announced last week that Tebow was traded from the Denver Broncos to New York. The Tebow trade occurred just before Nike replaces Reebok on Sunday as the supplier of NFL team uniforms.

Oregon-based Nike spokeswoman Mary Remuzzi said early Thursday that a temporary restraining order blocking further sales of the merchandise by Reebok was issued on Wednesday.

The lawsuit, which seeks un-

specified damages, claims that Reebok misappropriated publicity rights, interfered with business relationships and unjustly enriched itself because it failed to get Tebow's permission before launching the new products.

Reebok, based in Canton, Mass., did not immediately respond to a request seeking comment on the restraining order. The lawsuit said Reebok did not respond to demands to cease Tebow apparel sales after a Tebow representative sent a letter to the company on Friday.

Reebok is a subsidiary of Adidas AG.

According to the lawsuit, new Nike-supplied uniforms for all 32 NFL teams will be unveiled next week in New York City, kicking off a five-year deal for Nike to be the league's exclusive provider of on-field apparel, including game

uniforms and sideline apparel. Reebok had been the supplier for the last decade.

The lawsuit said demands for Tebow-related Jets apparel was intense last week during a normally subdued time for NFL merchandise sales.

It said Nike, based in Beaverton, Ore., believes Reebok was shipping large volumes of Tebow-

related apparel products to retailers for sale to the public this week, damaging Nike's ability to capitalize on a "unique and short-lived opportunity."

The lawsuit added that it was unlikely that a consumer who buys an unauthorized Tebow jersey or T-shirt from Reebok this week will purchase an authorized Tebow item from Nike next week.

Baseball team ready for season

By Kayla Cornett
Colby Free Press
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The Colby High baseball team had a tough time finishing out games last year, but with almost all its players returning this season, Coach Rick Williams says he's feeling confident about the Eagles' chances.

"We were really young last year," Williams said, "so I have almost everyone back."

The Eagles lost just two seniors, Nathan Quagliano and Sam Kendrick.

With the team practicing for a little over three weeks, Williams said the positions are not necessarily set, but they mostly know who the starters will be.

"It will depend on whose pitching," he said. "Every time we have a different pitcher on the mound, we'll have a different set up."

The number of pitchers he has this year may be the difference between winning and losing games, the coach said.

"We had the lead a lot on games last year, but we didn't have enough pitching depth to finish those games," Williams said. "I think we'll have a lot of pitching depth this year."

He added that the young pitchers he had last year will be a little more seasoned this spring.

"I think we'll have a pretty good year," he said. "Pretty much our whole pitching staff is back and they're a year older."

The Eagles had a 6-14 record last season. One highlight was taking fourth place at a Hays tournament.

This year's team comprises five seniors, eight juniors, seven sophomores and eight freshmen.

The boys play their first game at 4 p.m. Friday at the Colby ball fields against Holcomb. They will go on the road to play Ulysses next Thursday and will be back home to play Russell on Tuesday, April 10.

Colby Trap Club's summer league set

The Colby Trap Club's summer league begins Tuesday and continues on the first Tuesday of each month through Oct. 2.

If you want to shoot, either put together a five-person team or show up Tuesday evening. Some teams still need a shooter or two.

If you are wanting to learn

how to shoot and have fun with friends at the same time, this is your chance. The club has several members who are certified range masters and are always willing to give helpful pointers.

The range will be open at 5 p.m. Tuesday. For information, call Paul Bailey at 460-2839.

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