



DAILY Photo by John Godfrey

James Pinion, left, and Therman White look over the blueprints of the planned track at Jesse Owens Memorial Park in Oakville.

Organizers see many uses for planned Oakville track

By A. Stacy Long
DAILY Sports Writer

James Pinion and Therman White can dream of it.

Looking at a blank pasture at Oakville's Jesse Owens Park, the two see a track hosting a state-level All-Star Meet.

The Jesse Owens Gold Medal Track Events, they'll call it and it's in the plans.

With the eight-lane track scheduled for completion this fall, the two, who are heading the park's construction, say they would like to have the meet next year.

The meet would bring in athletes to compete in four events — the 100-meter dash, the 200-meter dash, the 400-meter relay and the long jump.

Jesse Owens won four events in the 1936 Olympics — the 100-meter dash, the 200-

meter dash, the 400-meter relay and the long jump.

"It would be interesting to see if one young man could win all four events like Jesse Owens did," said Pinion, who also plans to have re-enactments of the 1936 Olympics at the park. "The track is where he made his mark."

The track itself could spurn interest in a track program at Speake High, less than two miles away from the park.

Speake athletic director Harvey Bowling said he couldn't remember the school ever having a track program.

"Primarily, it's because of a lack of a track," Bowling said. "Secondly, we've had softball and baseball and also had golf, and it's hard to have enough kids to do everything."

Bowling said Speake has about 150 students in grades 9-12.

"What we try to do with our athletic program is serve the interests of our students," Bowling said.

"We had a stretch where there wasn't much interest in baseball, but there was in golf, so we fielded a golf team and had a few years where we didn't have a baseball team. This year, interest in baseball returned and we had a team, but not a golf team."

Another point of contention is what type of surface the track would have.

Pinion and White said cost would be a concern, along with usability by the community.

"Right now, we're looking at both (surfaces)," White said.

The two choices are an asphalt or rubberized surface.

The asphalt is cheaper, but has to be

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replaced more often. The rubber — if taken care of — is much better for a quality track meet.

Troy State University and the University of Alabama, where the state track meets are held, use the rubber surface.

"We've heard that the rubber is cheaper in the long run," Pinion said.

The rubber is not as flexible for bike-riding use, something Pinion and White said they wanted the community to be able to do on it.

"The rubber is a lot faster," Brewer High track coach David Estes said. "It will hold your spikes better, you take off better and run better. It's like basketball, if you play on concrete, you can't jump as high as you can on a wood floor."

"The rubber gives you a little spring."

Brewer has an asphalt track but

Estes uses the infield area to condition his athletes. The asphalt, he said, causes shin splints when used for conditioning.

Estes said the rubber track at Fairview High in Cullman County cost between \$35,000 and \$40,000. The one at Huntsville's Milton-Frank Stadium cost about \$175,000.

"That's top of the line at Milton-Frank," Estes said. "You can get a cheaper type, which looks as good and does a good job. It all depends on the quality and the thickness."