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DAILY Photo by Gary Cosby Jr.

James Pinion gets grass ready to lay in preparation for the dedication of Jesse Owens Museum.

Media on the move

Lawrence expects national coverage of Owens festival

By Ronnie Thomas
DAILY Staff Writer

OAKVILLE — The media squeeze on the Jesse Owens Museum dedication this weekend is expected to be happy, but often harrowing, memories of the frenzy during the park dedication and Atlanta Olympics torch run here almost two years ago.

"We've again attracted media from all over, and we couldn't be more pleased," said James Pinion, event coordinator. "The publicity will be a tremendous boost for our state and county, to let people know what kind of showcase in Jesse Owens' honor will be awaiting them when they visit."

Pinion said a four-person crew from ESPN in Connecticut will arrive Thursday night to prepare for coverage of a private luncheon Friday with members of the Owens family and \$100 contributors to the event.

Owens' widow, Minnie Ruth Owens; their three daughters, Marlene Owens Rankin, Beverly Owens Prather and Gloria Owens Hemphill; and their spouses will be here for the weekend.

Stuart Owen Rankin, Owens' grandson who carried the Olympic torch into the park in 1996, will not be able to attend due to a conflict.

Russ Rogers, the Ohio State University track coach, said he will participate. Owens

first gained widespread attention with his heroics as a member of the Buckeye team.

Following the luncheon, the group will tour the facility, which is being dedicated Saturday.

Pinion said ESPN plans to document the weekend, including the Jesse Owens Memorial Races.

"Actually, all the networks have expressed an interest in the museum dedication," Pinion said. "NBC is considering either being here for the weekend or doing a documentary on the museum and park at a later time. USA Today also is planning coverage."

Saturday's races, which will include a 10K

at Lawrence County High School. The races will end at the school's track.

"We hope all the runners will come out for the museum dedication and all the other things we'll have going on," Pinion said.

The Harmony Festival, sponsored by the park board, will start at noon and break for the dedication at 1 p.m. The ceremony will conclude

with the Owens family planting a white oak tree, symbolic of the four trees Owens was presented at the 1936 Berlin Games along with his four gold medals.

Festival participants will receive free tours of the museum.

Entertainment throughout the afternoon will be provided by The Flash Back Band, Tina Turner impressionist Dorothy Cole, Cynthia Jackson and other local talent. There will be games and activities for youngsters.

A lineup of festival foods will be available for purchase, including hotdogs, hamburgers and soft drinks. All proceeds will be used toward expenses and maintenance of the park.

The festival is to conclude at 5 p.m.