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Reaching the pinnacle

Former Kansas Relays director Beijing-bound

Saturday, Tim Weaver began one of the longest — but certainly most rewarding — journeys of his life.

The former Kansas Relays meet director left Kansas City International Airport in the early morning, for San Francisco where he and other U.S. Track and Field officials and some competitors flew 13 hours to Beijing, China, site of the 2008 Olympic Games.

“I flew to Moscow 14 hours. I’ve been to Osaka, Japan,” said Weaver, who for the past five years has worked as a manager

Track travels

A list of some of Weaver’s track travels:

- Manager for U.S. at 2003 IAAF World Indoor championships in Birmingham, England.
- Manager for U.S. at 2004 Team Challenge in Munich, Germany.
- Manager for U.S. Pan American Junior Championship team in 2005 in Windsor, Canada.
- Manager for U.S. at 2005 IAAF World Indoor Championships in Moscow.
- Member of coaching staff for 2006 IAAF World Cup team in Athens.
- Manager at 2007 IAAF Track World championships in Osaka, Japan.

for USA Track and Field at various international meets and will serve in the same capacity at the Olympics.

“But China ... whether reality or perception, it is the other side of the world. It’s such a closed-off place. I don’t know if any place I’ve been is as different as China.”

Weaver, a 1995 Tulsa graduate who spent 11 years at KU before becoming a real estate developer for **LANE4 Property Group** in Kansas City, Mo., will have various duties as a manager at the Games.

“The athletes will go through their training camp and practice. We’ll help them get acclimated to China, make sure they have the stuff they need for practice, meeting with the media and life over there waiting for competition,” Weaver said.

“My role once the track and field events start is a technical one. I’ll protest appeals for the athletes if there are any questions about fouls or false starts, if, say, somebody gets tangled up in the 800. There will be a whole staff of assistant coaches making sure every athlete’s rights are protected. The whole staff will have their backs, so to speak.”

Weaver is elated the U.S. Olympic Committee has rented a dorm at Beijing Normal University.

“There will be American food, American chefs, American pots and pans. It’ll be the best food in China,” said Weaver, who believes the athletes will be treated first-class as well in the Olympic Village.

“From everything we’ve been told, the Chinese want this to be an exceptional ex-



Former Kansas Relays meet director Tim Weaver, center, laughs with sprinters Maurice Greene, left, and Justin Gatlin during a news conference at Memorial Stadium in this April 2006 file photo. Weaver is going with other U.S. Track and Field officials to the Olympics in Beijing, China.

perience. From everything I’ve read, this is a huge coming-out party for this century for the Chinese,” Weaver said. “The Opening Ceremony is supposed to cost hundreds of millions of dollars. It should be a spectacular show. The city has been pushing English lessons and learning Western customs of politeness so everyone feels welcome.”

Weaver is planning on spending time with KU’s track Olympians at the Opening Ceremony as well as a spectator at their events.

KU volunteer assistant track coach Aarik Wilson will compete for the U.S. in the triple jump and KU senior sprinter Nickesha Anderson for Jamaica on the 400 relay team. Former KU standout Scott Russell will compete for Canada in the javelin.

“We’ll try to get Aarik, Nickesha and Scott together in the Olympic Village to hold up something with KU on it and show folks with KU blood we are all in there together,” said Weaver, who is working his first Olympics after helping prepare the U.S. athletes in 2004 in Munich, not traveling to Athens for the actual competition.

He’ll also be interested in cheering some of the athletes he brought to compete at the Relays during his days as meet manager. Kansas City native Muna Lee will compete in the 100 and 200. Also, former Relays MVPs Bershawn Jackson and Christian Cantwell will compete in the 400 hurdles and shot put, respectively.

“I hold the Olympic Games in the highest esteem,” Weaver said. “I’ve very much

enjoyed working with the world championship teams in the past and being part of international staffs. But for me, the Olympic Games are simply the pinnacle. To have the Olympic rings on one’s jacket is a tremendous honor.

“To be able to assist on this, play a role and watch these folks fulfill one of their life dreams is very rewarding.”

Weaver, by the way, will be sending e-mails to the Journal-World when time permits during his stay in China. The Journal-World and kusports.com will print his blog-like entries.

By Gary Bedore