sports

Fencing and indoor track championships cu

Last week's spring meeting of the ACC athletic directors seems reminiscent of the American Wild West.

At High Noon, the rugged gun slinger, fighting for survival, chalks up two more scratches on his gun handle after knocking off his latest victims.

Yesterday's memories are today's reality for the UNC fencing and indoor track teams. Just last week both of these sports learned they had been scratched from the list of ACC-sponsored championship sports. The battle of financial survival in college athletics has taken two more victims.

The conference's decision to cut back two more men's sports coincided with the addition of recognizing women's volleyball as a conference-sponsored event. So beginning in the 1980-1981 season there will be 11 men's sports and five women's

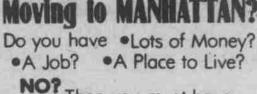


sports that have conference champions. The conference's attempt to balance the number of men's and women's sports is an effort to meet federal guidelines described in Title IX, but it seems the primary reason for the cutbacks is a simple thing called money.



"We just decided we would no longer conduct conference championships in these two sports," Marvin "Skeeter" Francis, director of the ACC Service Bureau, said in a telephone interview this week. "Most schools will continue their programs but there just won't be champions in them. They will become more like club sports."

Francis said the decisions were in no way



athletic directors were given a list of all sports and they took it into consideration the number of participants, scholarships involved and how many people would be "disturbed" by the cancellation of the particular sport's championship. After much discussion, lobbying and dealmaking, the athletic directors voted. When the cards were laid on the table, fencing and indoor track were left face down. Surprisingly enough, swimming and lacrosse were very close in the vote.

"I don't think anyone is really upset about it (the decision)," Francis said.

Wrong, Skeeter. Try second floor Woollen Gym, first door on the left, and meet Ron Miller, UNC's fencing coach.

For the past 13 years Miller has built one of the best and most respected fencing programs in the country. Since the sport's 1971 initiation in the ACC, Carolina has won eight conference championships, and thus fencing ranks as UNC's most

harder to recruit and it will hurt the level of competition in the long run. And because of that it can't do anything but hurt the program."

UNC is one of a few conference schools that give partial aid for fencing and the future continuation of that policy could also be jeopardized.

Although Miller doesn't believe Title IX had a direct effect on the decision, he also knows the money needed to strengthen women's programs must come from somewhere. "I'm just sorry if we became a victim of it," he said.

The exclusion of indoor track does not really make any substantial difference because of the outdoor track and cross country seasons. Also, UNC is the only school that has a suitable indoor track area.

But the decision to axe fencing poses many questions. Why would the ACC, which is the national leader in fencing, cut

