

Cross country still strong after Nesbit

By SCOTT CANTERBERRY
Staff Writer

Gone from North Carolina's women's cross country team is all-world runner Joan Nesbit. But according to coach Don Lockerbie, the 1984 Tar Heels will surprisingly be as good, if not better, than the team which finished eighth in the NCAAs and fourth in the TAC national championships last year.

Losing Nesbit, UNC's first female cross country All-American, "is like losing the franchise," Lockerbie said. However, the return of the next top six runners and a talented recruiting class, the Tar Heels should again be among the nation's best.

Leading the way will be junior All-American Holly Murray. Murray, described by her coach as the team's fiercest competitor, missed both the indoor and outdoor track seasons because of a knee injury that also bothered her during the summer.

Murray, a team co-captain, should return to top form before the season starts and continue to compete very well on the national level, Lockerbie said.

Because cross country scores depend on the placing of the team's top five individuals in the 5,000 meter race, team depth is essential to winning. Only seven runners are allowed to compete for the team in the ACC, district, and national championships.

Along with Murray, returning members from last year's top seven are junior co-captain Madlyn Morreale, juniors Kemper Knight and Kathy Norcross, and sophomores Karol Dorsett and Heather Zimmerman.

Lockerbie said he looks for Morreale, the only woman on the team to beat Nesbit, "to regain the form and improve upon her outstanding freshman year."

"We have three or four sophomores and juniors not in the top seven that could probably be on any other team in the nation," he said, adding that juniors Valerie Roback, Becky Calhoun, and Katie Merten all have good shots at securing a starting spot.

Redshirt freshman Jeanne Matta could be a big surprise for UNC. Matta was one of the nation's top high school runners two years ago before being injured last year. She will also be in contention for the top seven.

Top recruit Vicky Verinder, last year's Virginia state champ in the mile, two mile, and cross country, "has the potential to be sensational in both Carolina and American distance running," Lockerbie said.

Leah Ann Miller, an outstanding track runner, "is one of the most talented athletes we've seen in a long time," he said, adding that Miller might be able to help this year's team.

A late recruit was Audrey Baldessari, one of New Jersey's top distance prospects last year.

Despite the loss of Nesbit, who will be a graduate assistant coach for the team, Lockerbie said that if the girls improve their times 15 to 20 seconds from last year, the team could move up into the nation's top five.

He said his team was on a "two-year plan that could give it the national crown in 1985." Within that schedule, Lockerbie said this year would both improve and season his young team. Next year, with all of the top runners returning, the Tar Heels could be serious contenders for the national championship.

The women open the season in a nationally flavored event in the Western Ontario Invitational in Canada on Sept. 22. But the first true test for the team in the post-Nesbit era will be Sept. 29, when seven of last year's top 14 NCAA team finishers meet in Chapel Hill for the Tar Heel Invitational.

"This will be the top cross country invitational in the country," Lockerbie said. National power participants include North Carolina State, Tennessee, Clemson, Brigham Young, Florida and

CROSS COUNTRY

Coach: Don Lockerbie
Homesite: Finley course
Starters returning: Women (6) Holly Murray, Madlyn Morreale, Kathy Norcross, Karol Chambers, Heather Zimmerman, Kemper Knight. Men (5) Tom Bobrowski, Jack Morgan, Jim Farmer, Mike Currinder, Walter Deneen
Forecast: With six of last year's top seven runners returning and great depth, the women's team has the potential to improve upon last year's eighth place NCAA finish. The men should be a much improved team and could finish in the top half of the ACC.



Jack Morgan

Virginia.

A coaches' preseason poll picked UNC second to NCSU, he said. He added that UNC, as well as Clemson, should give the State team a good run for the conference championship.

The ACC championships are Oct. 27 in Chapel Hill and the NCAA District III championships are Nov. 10 in Greenville, S.C. Only the top four women's teams from the 13 southern states advance to the NCAA championships.

With its returning contingent of runners, excellent depth and a contributing freshman class, the women's cross country team should again be a powerful force on the national front.

The men's cross country team should improve upon last year's rebuilding season but will be hard-pressed to make a significant climb in the ACC standings.

A very young team that finished sixth in the 1983 ACC championships should be a much improved, more experienced squad this fall. But coach Don Lockerbie said it was still "hard to project at the moment" what kind of season the team would have in 1984.

"We still might be a year away," he said. The Tar Heels tied for fifth place with N.C. State in an ACC coaches' preseason poll. But that's no dishonor, since the ACC is arguably the nation's toughest conference.

George Nicholas, who sat out last season after transferring to UNC following two years at Wake Forest, should provide "a kick in the pants" for this year's team, Lockerbie said.

The nation's top high school distance

runner in 1981, Nicholas finished seventh in the 1982 ACC championships and then transferred to UNC.

"Nicholas is a penetrator — one guy who has a chance to win a race — and we didn't have that last year," Lockerbie said.

"He has world experience; he's one of the most respected athletes in the conference and should be a contender for the ACC crown."

Lockerbie called Nicholas, a team co-captain, the "best American in the conference."

Behind Nicholas, the next six finishers could emerge from a large group of talented runners.

Senior Jack Morgan seems to be ready for his finest cross country season, Lockerbie said. Senior co-captain Tom Bobrowski, a junior transfer last year, has made the adjustment to UNC and is a superior runner, he added.

Also, transfer Steve Dixon should vie for a top seven spot.

Juniors Bill Will and Lauren Willis could contribute to this year's team in the starting lineup.

Two sophomores, Jim Farmer and Mike Currinder, who were in the top seven last year, "have the potential as younger runners to get in some great races this year," Lockerbie said.

He also said junior David Schnorrenberg, a slow starter who comes around in October and November, should push people to stay in shape during the season.

Even with a talented group of incoming freshmen, the chances of this year's class contributing like last year's freshmen are slim, Lockerbie said.

"Hopefully, to contribute, the freshmen will have to run sensationally instead of by injury to a starting runner," he said.

John Hussey, the 10th-ranked miler in the country last year, headlines a good recruiting crop. Eric Landis from East Mecklenburg High in Charlotte could be a great runner in the future, Lockerbie said.

He said freshman Chuck Lotz, who only became a serious runner last year after dropping football, is a "real find that has the natural ability to be a future star." Another good prospect is Cincinnati native Ken Ehemam.

Lockerbie said it is difficult for freshmen to be prepared for their first college cross country season.

"They don't know how to train in the summer," he said.

College cross country races are 10,000 meters and five miles, double the typical high school race. "It just doubles the workload," Lockerbie said.

Clemson, a team dominated by foreigners, is the preseason favorite to take the ACC crown, he said.

If UNC is to knock off any or all of the next three ranked teams, Wake, Virginia, and Maryland, "we must believe in ourselves and go for broke," Lockerbie said.

Last year's outstanding recruiting class at Carolina was offset by tremendous recruiting classes in most of the other schools in the conference, he said, calling last year's ACC crop "the greatest freshman class in any conference in the country."

"It will be highly competitive in the conference for a long time," he said.

"It won't get any easier."

Like the women, the men open the season at the Western Ontario Invitational. Then it's back to the Tar Heel Invitational to run in a competitive field including Fairleigh-Dickinson, Brigham Young and William and Mary, among others.

Lockerbie said the Finley course had been changed this year to make UNC cross country a better spectator sport.

"Within a three-mile race, you will be able to see the runner in seven or eight different places," he said.

The ACC championships will be held on the Finley course Oct. 27.



Track threesome paces cross country team

DTH/Jeff Marshall

X-country trio have more in common than merely sharing an apartment

By BOB YOUNG
Staff Writer

Mike Currinder, Jim Farmer and George Nicholas are more than just teammates on the North Carolina men's cross-country team. They're also roommates living in an off-campus apartment.

And they have more in common than a sense of anticipation for the upcoming season. They all possess personalities that mix - in equal proportions - a serious, dedicated side with a light, comical side.

When discussing their living arrangements, they are somewhat less than serious.

"I was living off-campus last year and I didn't want to change that," says Nicholas, a Wake Forest transfer. "So I convinced Mike and Jim to go in on an apartment."

"We did it for the camaraderie," Farmer says.

"We're homosexuals," jokes Currinder, who hails from St. Louis.

Actually, Farmer and Currinder, both sophomores, decided on the apartment because of their disenchantment with dormitory life.

"There were too many distractions," Farmer says.

And Nicholas believes that it's easier for teammates to get along together away from the track.

"If you're living with a non-athlete, you seem like two different kinds of people, an athlete and a regular person," he says. "But with us, we can just treat each other like normal people. Running isn't a big topic."

"Yeah, we even had a Tupperware party last night," Currinder says.

When it comes to more important matters, however, the threesome becomes

more serious. Currinder's attitude speaks for the group.

"When I'm on the track or in the classroom, I want to be totally serious about what I'm doing," he says. And right now, that seriousness is focused on the upcoming season.

Emphasizing that the team is basically young, the three seem to have a guarded optimism about how the season will shape up.

"We'll definitely be better than last year," Farmer says. "If we can get good races from all the team members consistently, we could surprise some people."

Nicholas, whose performance will be key to the team's success, knows that there will be pressure on him to do well.

"With notoriety comes expectations," he says. "But I'm just going to run the best that I can and let the other things fall into place."

Farmer and Currinder both believe that

the experience of being in the top seven of last year's squad will be a point in their team's favor.

However, the threesome's dedication doesn't end when they take off their spikes - their academic achievements prove that. All three are on the dean's list.

"School definitely comes first," Nicholas says.

"If I saw my grades starting to slip," says Farmer, "I would quit running in a second."

But so far there have been no problems, and none are foreseen. After all, with that blend of dedication that doesn't fall into obsession and looseness that doesn't become carelessness, how could there be problems?

"Well, we have to teach Jim to cook," Currinder says.

"No," Farmer says. "I'll just find myself a honey so she can do it for me."

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