

Cross country teams offer a study in contrast

By MARK ANDERSON
Staff Writer

After several seasons in the shadows, the North Carolina women's cross-country program is ready to run into the men's spotlight. The Tar Heels captured only sixth in last year's ACC Championships but return their top five finishers.

"They went on to finish seventh in the South (NCAA District III), which shows they could have done better earlier," said head coach Dennis Craddock. "I feel good about this team, especially its depth."

Craddock faces a different challenge with the men's squad. They took third in the ACC but graduated their top three finishers — Mike McGowan (fourth), Chuck Lotz (14th) and Paul Cummings (18th).

"You can't replace them. They meant so much as leaders and were good people on and off the course," Craddock said. "The veterans will move in and try hard, but it may take awhile. It won't happen overnight."

While he searches for a frontrunner on the men's team, Craddock can count on fifth-year senior Chryssa Nicholas (All-South in 1988) and junior Michelle Faherty to lead the women. The pair headed the Tar Heel pack all last year, finishing 14th and 17th in the ACC, respectively.

"Chryssa is a true long-distance runner. I expect her to be a leader both on and off the course as she has done for the last year," Craddock said. "After a good outdoor track season and summer training session, she has more confidence."

"She'll be better able to assume the



Dennis Craddock

role of the up-front runner," he said of Nicholas, who has an extra season of eligibility after being red-shirted in 1986 with a foot injury.

"Michelle is really a middle-distance runner just trying to help out the cross-country program," Craddock said. "She is a very hard worker. On days when we need concentration, she is very intense, but she is also the person who plays tricks and jokes and keeps everyone at ease on the long days."

After the top two, the Tar Heels' depth begins to show with the experienced trio of juniors Jamie Newnam, Karen Sahn and Jeanne Peterson. Newnam, a Pittsboro native, took 26th in the ACC and was followed closely by Sahn (27th) and

Peterson (33rd).

"Right now, the fifth spot is a toss-up," Craddock said. "Jane Boulter (a transfer from France) has also looked good. She's having trouble adjusting to the humidity, but we expect her to be right there by October."

Craddock said that senior 800-meter specialist Kari Krehnbrink and sophomore Leigh Deal are also in the running for the fifth spot.

"We really need the fifth runner to move up so we can pack the next four behind Chryssa," Craddock said.

Craddock is also looking forward to the experience of this year's squad.

"They've been through the wars. They know what to expect and nothing should take them by surprise," he said. "With maturity also comes the ability to focus and concentrate."

Craddock doesn't mince words when it comes to the outlook for the men's season.

"It's a definite rebuilding year," he said.

Craddock has only five upperclassmen and only two, Eric Hichman and Vince Howard, with any real experience. Unfortunately, Hichman has mononucleosis and will probably be red-shirted. Craddock said a decision would be made before the first meet (Sept. 9).

Runners like Howard (25th in the ACC in 1988) will now be forced into a leadership role somewhat foreign to them.

"We've talked to the upperclassmen. We need to assure them that the whole world is not on their shoulders," Craddock said. "They also need to realize that even

though it's a rebuilding year, we can still do well."

One reason why Craddock may be a little more willing to extend Hichman's eligibility another year is his freshman class.

"These five freshmen are as good as any I've had a chance to recruit," said Craddock of a college coaching career that spans 13 seasons. "I'm very excited for the future."

However, Craddock also cautioned that one freshman, Tom Woods, will be red-shirted because of an injury

and for a freshman to contribute immediately is "icing on the cake."

Coaching such a young team also presents special challenges for Craddock.

"You have to make sure that the freshmen aren't killing themselves every day in practice trying to impress the upperclassmen," he said. "You also can't have the upperclassmen trying to put the 'five hot shots' in their place all the time. So far, we haven't had any of that."

Craddock also made some schedule changes for the 1989 campaign.

"I like variety in places to run, workouts and schedules," he said. "If you aren't careful, you get locked into the same places and teams."

The Tar Heels will get a taste of the Deep South by running at the University of Georgia and on the ACC Championship course at Maryland. Craddock also said the Tar Heel Invitational (Sept. 30) will have more quality teams than in past years.

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difference in her when she plays," Bradley-Doppes said of Berg. "She paid her dues this summer with camps and workouts."

Rounding out the junior class are Patti Hopkins, a 5-6 setter who saw a lot of action there as a freshman, and 6-0 Paula Martin, an outside hitter who transferred to North Carolina from Barton County Community College in Kansas.

Sophomore outside hitter Missy Mroczek played well coming off the bench in 95 games last season, and 5-7 setter Miriam Fulford's hustle earned her appearances in 93 games last year as a freshman.

The Tar Heels' back row play will be bolstered by Lisa Radford, a 5-9 sophomore who won a spot on the 1989 team during spring workouts.

The influx of freshman into the Tar

Heel program has made Bradley-Doppes' task of choosing starters a difficult one.

"I can't even tell you who will be my top six, or even who my top ten will be," Bradley-Doppes said. "We have a lot of depth."

"We've always been a good offensive team. What we tried to recruit was a nice combination of quickness and power. We're going to be a better team defensively, and our quickness will help our offensive options."

Among the eight new faces on the Tar Heel squad are two local players. Dana Batchelder is a 5-9 middle blocker from Raleigh, and Rene Palmer is a 5-11 middle blocker/outside hitter from Thomasville.

Chris White is a 6-0 middle

blocker who was an AAU All-America in Michigan. Seresaa Setzer, at 6-1, and 5-11 Carolyn Flanders are players Bradley-Doppes said could develop into forces after gaining some experience.

Are North Carolina's veteran players seasoned enough, and are the freshmen talented enough to ensure an encore of last year's success?

"It's hard to repeat at any time, but the work ethic has been very strong," Bradley-Doppes said. "Sure, we'll have to overcome the humps of inexperience. The desire and skill are there."

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