

Tired of the same old routine? Join the club!

by Yvonne DeGraw

Looking for some serious competition?

Maybe you've tried intramurals and feel ready for more.

Or maybe your sport is a little bit eclectic, and there just aren't any intramural games for you.

If so, you might be interested in one of the 28 extramural sports clubs at A&M, but be ready for the time it will take.

Paula Opal, who has worked with the sports clubs for the past three years, says the students who are involved in extramural sports clubs practice an average of six to eight hours during the week, and most travel to a tournament every other weekend.

"I'm just amazed that these kids can stay in school," she says.

The clubs are funded by student service fees. The extramural clubs draw up budgets and send one big request to student government — just as the MSC committees and other groups do. This year the sports clubs got a total of \$48,200 in student service fees.

But these fees don't fund all of the club activities. Opal says the club members are expected to do fundraising on their own. The budget request an individual club is allowed to make is based, in part, on its fundraising success.

"We like to be on a matching grant kind of basis," she says. "Funding is not intended to cover everything."

She says the number of clubs funded by her department varies. Two new groups — a women's soccer club and a pistol club — will have probationary status next year. They won't receive funding but will be able to apply for it next year.

The Triathlon club will be active and eligible for funding next year, she says.

Bob Talamini, says he and a Joe Pickell decided to organize the triathlon club this school year. Pickell is the president/treasurer, and Talamini is the secretary/vice president.

"It's a real two man operation," Talamini says.

But the club now has about 25 members who travel to triathlons around the state.

Talamini says he practices 1½ to two hours a day, six days a week. Small groups practice on weekdays and the club tries to get larger groups together on weekends to practice running, cycling and swimming.

"We probably have somebody racing every other week," he says.

He says he will request \$2,500 in funding for next year, but he doesn't expect to be given that much.

Opal says funding for individual clubs ranges from \$200 to \$3,300.

"I would say the bulk of the clubs get between \$1,200 and \$1,600 for . . . their expenses," she says. "It depends on how many trips a club is taking, the number of people that are traveling, what entry fees could be and what league dues are."

"When I took over the sports club program three years ago, we rarely had a request under \$3,000. Last year when we did the budgeting we were very, very close to what the clubs actually need."

Opal says the largest expense for most clubs is travel.

"You must travel and you must compete," she says. "Those are the requirements for clubs."

"Lacrosse has a conference, rugby has a union, raquetball has open tournaments at clubs, soccer doesn't technically have a league, but they play many schools in the area," she says.

John Baldwin, a junior finance major and president of the soccer club, says his team plays both clubs and varsity teams. Most of the other teams have coaches, but last year this A&M club finished second in the Southwest Conference without having the

Pictured at right are two participants in the Texas Triathlon Six which was held Saturday, March 28 and attracted 800 participants from 11 states. A&M's triathlon club was organized this school year, and its members compete in triathlons around the state.

benefit of a coach. This past weekend, they won against Rice University's team for the first time in eight games.

The soccer team hasn't been a varsity sport since Jackie Sherrill took over the Athletic Department. Now they are working toward becoming a Varsity II-level sport.

The 22 members of the club organized a tournament for players younger than 19 and donated half of the profits to the College Station youth soccer league.

