

Harriers seek improvement this weekend at Rice

BY MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Cross Country Team is preparing for its second meet of the year with a specific goal in mind — improvement. The squad will have an opportunity to see how far it has come since its first meet two weeks ago when it competes at the Rice Invitational in Houston Saturday.

"In virtually any sport, but especially cross country, you improve the most from your first contest to the second," A&M Head Coach Greg Hinze said.

This weekend, Hinze and the rest of the Aggie harriers expect positive results against a talented field of six teams. Running at the event is Rice University, Sam Houston State, Lamar University, the University of Houston, and ironically, the Ragin' Cajuns of Southwestern Louisiana, a school the Aggie football team knows well.

"The favorites are probably Rice and Houston, besides us," Hinze said. "I expect it to be a good test and show us where we stand as a team."

The Aggies are still in the early stages of the season, because they had last weekend off following the Audubon Invitational on Sept. 7. The Aggies placed well there, with the women and men finishing 3rd and 5th, respectively.

Junior Milli Ondras paced the ladies and Scott Lengefeld was the top male finisher, both coming in 10th individually.



(From left) Scott Lengefeld, Sandie Ramsey, Debbie Villanueva, Stephen Erath and Ann Dwyer go for a jog Thursday.

The two runners are half of the group singled out by Hinze as his top performers this week.

"Ondras, Amy Stanberry, Scott Erath and Lengefeld have been my top performers this week in practice," Hinze said. "As an athlete, you must adapt to training. During this recovery week, these four have been our strongest runners. I think they're ready to run well on Saturday."

The decision to redshirt several seniors this season is working out as Hinze expected so far.

"I am pleased with how we've done so far," Hinze said. "We're getting our younger runners some good travel experience, so they'll know what it's all about come time for the Big 12 Champi-

onships and especially next year. The team's practices during recovery week have consisted of reduced mileage. The team has also been training at off-campus trails near the Brazos River on mornings, which Hinze says are their hill-running practice. Noon practices are held on campus.

If a competitive field is easier week of practice were tentative enough, there would be something extra driving the Aggie harriers this weekend.

"We've got quite a few runners on our roster from Houston and surrounding area," Hinze said. "They're keyed up because they're running in front of their families."

Belittling words are not to let the USL loss stop them.

"He told us to take it slow and that we'd be right," Connell said. "Most coaches get mad [the A&M coaches] are not uptight and still have confidence in us."

While Connell has goals set for himself, ensuring the team's success comes first.

"Coming out of junior college, I was concerned more on the individual," Connell said. "This year, my goal is to have a great team season and want to get 1,000 yards this season."

While some collegiate athletes are concerned about joining the professional leagues, Connell said he takes each game in stride.

"I am looking forward to playing in the pros, I want to try and finish school," Connell said. "I'm looking too far forward, because I don't want to focus. I'm doing the team thing right now."

CONNELL

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"We are definitely in sync and we work together one-on-one," Connell said. "We have a good relationship. He has confidence in us, and we have confidence in him."

It has taken Connell awhile to get into the swing of things this season. He had five catches for 32 yards against BYU on Aug. 24, and just four receptions for 52 yards against the University of Southwestern Louisiana last week.

His poor performance against USL stems from the fact that he did not start because he violated team rules by skipping a class. Connell said he let the team down because he missed the first half of the game, but Head Coach R.C. Slocum told the of-

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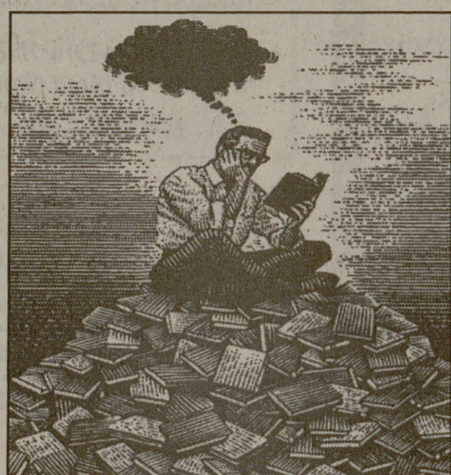
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