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Winning called a luxury for cross country teams

By Shelley Smith

Finishing last in the Big Eight doesn't bother UNL's cross country teams. And winning isn't everything to them—if anything.

"If we win a few meets that's a luxury on the side," said Carol Frost, UNL women's head track coach.

Assistant men's track coach Dick Railsback and Frost said both teams use cross country to train for the upcoming track season.

"Most of the runners aren't distance runners," Railsback said. "But running distance helps them to improve their middle distance times."

THE WOMEN'S TEAM finished fifth in the Big Eight last year and the men's team finished last.

According to Railsback both teams would do well if winning meets was their goal.

"If we really pushed for it and aimed at peaking at the NCAA cross country championships, I'm sure we'd do well," Railsback said.

Most cross country teams that do well have light indoor track schedules, Railsback said.

HE PREDICTED THAT Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri again will finish in the top four.

"Colorado has an advantage because they train at a high altitude. When they come down to lower elevations, they're in better shape," Railsback explained.

But, UNL should not be ruled out, he said.

Although the team is made up heavily of middle distance runners who will move up to the longer distance, it should be stronger this year, he said.

Freshman Phil Shirley, a 1500 and 5000 meter runner from Hollywood, Calif. should be the fall's sensation, he said.

SHIRLEY WAS NAMED a California

outstanding athlete and a High School All-American last spring.

"He's really our only long distance runner, and he has the ability to help us out," he said.

Returning letterman Brian Dunnigan, a junior who finished third in the Big Eight Outdoor meet in the 1500 meter, should also be impressive this fall, Railsback said.

Middle distance runners, Scott Poehling, Tim McCashland and Paul Downes will complete the men's five-man squad, he said.

Poehling, three time Big Eight individual champion in the 800 meter race, said it doesn't bother him that UNL does not do well in cross country.

"IT'S THE BASIS for our track season, and we prove we have the best distance runners in the conference by our indoor and outdoor seasons," he said.

UNL was close to winning the "grand slam" of distance races last spring at the Big Eight Indoor championship meet, he said.

UNL placed first in the 400, 800, and 1000 meter race, second in the mile and third in the 600 meter race.

Poehling said the cross country team is young and inexperienced but added, "we've got guys who can run."

Frost said she's not sure who the top five women runners will be, but said returning lettermen Lisa Kramer, Cindy Vickers and Tami Essington should be strong.

She said she looks for Iowa State to be strong again followed by Kansas and Kansas State.

"We just want each individual athlete to improve her time. If we win—we win," she added.

The women begin their season Sept. 15 in Wichita, Kan., and the men are scheduled to begin Sept. 22 against Iowa State in Ames.

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