

Sole Aztec qualifier

Harrier Riley set for Nationals

by Larry Swimer
Sports Assistant

Sophomore harrier Diane Riley will be the lone Aztec representative tomorrow when the nation's top cross country teams and individuals assemble in Denver for the final competition of the 1978 season, the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women cross country meet.

"I didn't know what to expect," said Riley, who placed 21st in the regional meet two weeks ago to earn a spot in the nationals. "I heard a lot about the altitude in Denver," she said.

According to Coach Fred LaPlante, the altitude in the mile high city will definitely be a factor, but maybe not as much as people think.

"All Diane has to do is run her usual race," LaPlante said. According to the Aztec skipper, Riley's strength is in the middle of the 5,000 meters which is a good way to run in high altitude.

"If you are a front runner, you might go out too fast, suffer oxygen problems and fade in the last two miles," he said. "However, she can't go out too slow because it will be hard to come back."

Riley and LaPlante do not have much more of a battle plan yet.

"We have to see the course first," LaPlante said. "I know it is generally flat, but am not sure about turns and bottle necks."

This will be Riley's second visit to a national meet. Last season she and teammate Jeanne Abare, who failed to qualify this time partially due to an unfortunate fall early in the regional race, ran finishing 120 and 107, respectively.

"Diane has been running about one minute faster than last year," LaPlante said. "We have set a goal to finish in the top 100." In all there will be 24 teams and 247 individuals running.

The three teams that will represent this region will be Cal Berkeley, Cal State Northridge and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

"All three of these teams should do pretty well," LaPlante said.

"Berkeley could be in the top three or four or maybe even win it."

According to LaPlante, Berkeley has five good young runners and if all five have excellent performances, Berkeley could take top honors.

However, the Bears lack experience but it will not be known until after the race if that is any sort of a factor.

Iowa State, who was last season's champion, will be returning with the same team. They are con-

fident about their chances.

Another team that feels they can come away with the first place award is Penn State.

"Penn State has the best runner in the field in Cathy Mills" LaPlante said. "Last year they finished second, 24 points behind Iowa."

Colorado, who finished third last season, comes into the meet with two highly regarded runners, Dana Slater and Mary Decker, but after that they are not real strong. However, being the home team and the most comfortable with the surroundings, they will probably do real well.

The weather will not be what the California runners are accustomed to. Yesterday the high was 42 degrees and the low, 26.

"I don't believe the climate really makes a difference," LaPlante said. "It is just a mental thing."

Just to be sure that Riley is ready for both the climate and altitude, he took her up to the Cuyamaca mountains, at about 5,000 feet.

"There was snow on the ground," LaPlante said. "Diane worked out for a while and really liked it."

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Aztec Riley fares well among regional harriers at Nationals

by Larry Swimer
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More than 280 harriers from across the nation assembled in Denver Saturday to display their skills for the final and most competitive meet of the season, the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women national 5,000 meter cross country meet.

Among this fine collection of athletes was SDSU's Diane Riley, who along with nine other individuals and three teams, earned

the chance to represent the West Coast two weeks ago at the regional meet in Long Beach.

"I was very happy with Diane's performance," said Coach Fred LaPlante. "She was the 10th best from our region."

Riley, who finished 21 in the regionals, glided under the wire in 18:59, placing her 112th.

"She ran 36 seconds faster than last year," LaPlante said. "And this year we were in a high altitude city."

Riley, who has proved to be one of the more competitive runners in the West Coast, ran a pretty easy race.

"She did not pass or get passed too often," LaPlante said. "Although she probably did pass more runners than passed her."

The race, which was run on a relatively wide open and flat course, turned into an excellent team battle.

Iowa State, who won last year with 40 points and returned the same team, took top honors once

again, but did it with 119 points. While they placed all five scorers in the top 25 last year, Saturday their fifth runner was 63rd.

North Carolina State, with a total of 144 points, was runner up. Penn State, just one point behind them, was third. The home team, Colorado was also close to North Carolina, finishing fourth with 147 points.

The rest of the top 10 in order was Oregon, 180, Wisconsin, 190, Berkeley, 199, Virginia, 208, Maryland, 210 and Michigan State 212.

"I was a little bit disappointed about how our region did," LaPlante said. Besides Berkeley, the other two squads were Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and Cal State Northridge, finishing 11 and 21, respectively.

Colorado's track star, Mary Decker, won the race crossing the line in 16:59. Julie Shea of North Carolina State was second and Cathy Mills from Penn State, third.