Club teams dilemma for high school pilots

Ann Regan does it. So do Kris Costello, Roxanne Bier, Marquita Belk and many of the other top girls' track athletes in this area.

It isn't what they do that causes the problem, though. It's what they *don't* do.

All of these girls, you see, run for the Cindergals, the local Amateur Athletic Union team that so consistently has molded young women into the top track performers in the country. But, the trouble is, they also run for their high school teams.

As a result, this is one two-for-the-price-of-one deal that doesn't always work. Because while all these girls practice with the Cindergals, they're also expected to occasionally stop by and say hello to their high school teammates. And it's pretty hard for them to be in two places at one time.

Augie Argabright
. . .A track nut

Thus, the problem.

"What I don't like," grumbled one coach, "is that she comes to me and doesn't want to run certain events. Maybe I want her to go in one race, but she doesn't want to because one of her friends from the Cindergals will be running in that one. Or maybe because she's been training for a different race.

"I don't mind her not practicing with us. I just want her to do what I say when she does run with us."

It's a complaint that's been heard often throughout the current track season. And it's not reserved to track, either — swimming coaches have been singing the same refrain about the various local swim clubs that swallow up their top prospects.

"It's a hard question," said Costello's coach at Lynbrook, Jerra Rowland. "In Kris' case, she trains year-round. I can't offer her that, because I have to coach other sports.

"If Kris wants to be as good as she can be, she has to train year-round. And the Cindergals really stand out, of course. It does create some hassles, but it's been OK."

The most important thing to keep in mind here is that no one is really at fault. The girls have to think of their future, and they're simply not going to improve by running against high school competition all the time. These are potential world-class athletes we're talking about, not just a bunch of high school all-stars.

Another thing is that these girls, by and large, are anything but selfish. Take, for example, Camden High's Regan, who rates around 11-plus on a scale of 1-10 in the Nice People of the World category.

"The high school competition *is* kind of bad for us (Cindergals members) because we all start going against each other," Regan said at last week's Central Coast Section girls' qualifying meet. "We come here to this meet and we all sit together and warm up together.

"I'm sure a lot of people look at that as bad because we're not really on the high school team — we only run for them. But that's the way it has to be."

The man in the eye of this storm is Estle "Augie" Argabright, who didn't even know what the AAU was when he first formed the Cindergals 11 years ago. Now the AAU certainly knows who he is, and Augie, in turn, knows his share about track.

"It started out as a fun thing," he says. "But I've read about track every night for 11 years. I guess you could say I'm a track nut."

Those words still might not placate coaches who say their girls aren't getting good training. But Argabright has an ally in Regan's coach at Camden, Bob Woods.

"Letting Ann run on our team is her right," Woods says. "The girls don't mind that she doesn't practice with the team.

"That never bothered me, because she's had success with it. Anyway, she's pointing toward making the Junior National team and going to Moscow — that's more important to her than winning state. I don't care who gets the credit for her success; I just want her to have success."

Regan figures to have more and more success as time goes on. Clearly, the Cindergals is the best thing for her.

"She's had 50 college offers already (she's just a junior), and when word gets around that she's been training with these kinds of people, she's going to get noticed," Argabright said.

Success. Notoriety. Improvement. That's what everyone wants these girls to do.

And like they say, it's not *how* you do it. . .it's *what* you do.