



FRESHMAN DUO — UC Irvine's two outstanding freshman distance runners, Brian Hunsaker, left, a Corona del Mar grad and Loara's Ralph Serna will make their collegiate debut Saturday when the Anteaters open the

'75 cross country season at the Reno, Nevada Invitational. Coach Len Miller's young squad (five sophomores and two freshmen) are one of the early favorites for the NCAA Division II national title this fall.

IRVINE HATTERS ROOM AS COLLEGIATE

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Last week's column spotlighted area prep cross country prospects. This week, the collegians rate a mention.

With Cal State Fullerton dropping out of the track and cross country picture, that leaves UC Irvine as the major running

power among Orange County colleges. The Anteaters are pointing towards the NCAA Division II championships which they will host in November and, barring injuries, are a "cinch" to vastly improve on last year's 13th place finish.

In fact, coach Len Miller is looking for a national title, if not this year, certainly in '76. It's not just the usual optimistic talk coaches are often prone to indulge in, but a realistic, matter-of-fact appraisal of UCI's talent.

To begin with, Miller has Steve Scott, the Division II mile champion, and Bob Tillman, a national scorer over the longer distances. Both are just sophomores and figure to pick up a lot of points for the Anteaters before their careers are through.

Those two alone would be enough to raise hopes on the

UCI campus, but the real aces are freshmen Ralph Serna, Loara's two-time 4A cross country champion and Brian Hunsaker, former star distance man at Corona del Mar. The pair lived up to preseason ballyhoo in last weekend's Reno Invitational, Serna capturing first in 24:57 over a tough five mile course with Hunsaker six seconds back in third. Teamwise, the Anteaters edged host Nevada-Reno, itself a strong national contender, 27-28 for the team trophy.

A good beginning, to be sure, but an even tougher test, perhaps the ruggedest of the season (except for the national championship meet) awaits UCI Saturday at the UCLA Invitational. In addition to the host Bruins, which are developing into a topnotch squad, the field includes dangerous Cal State

Los Angeles, WAC power Arizona and Long Beach State, one of the West Coast's best and an easy winner of their own invite two weeks ago against a strong field.

Another possible entry is Oregon, last year's NCAA Division I runnerup and perennially one of the top producers of quality distance runners in the country. If the Ducks do decide to make the trip south, they should be considered the team favorite, but don't be surprised if UCI finishes ahead of the rest of the field.

EX-FRIAR STARS

Tim Garcia, a 1974 Servite graduate, is drawing some raves at Marymount College in Salina, Kansas. Garcia won All-American honors by finish-

te powerhouse

ing sixth in the NAIA marathon national championships last spring. Garcia is one of the mainstays on a veteran squad at the midwestern school, led by national titlist Tony Brien.

The Spartans boast five returning lettermen and opened the season last Friday in the Wichita State Invitational, one of the top meets on the midwest harrier circuit.

PREP SHORTS

Los Alamitos finished sixth with 138 points in its division of the Corona del Mar Invitational last weekend as Edison apparently stamped itself as the team to beat in Orange County. Paced by Colin McConnell's winning 9:50 over the two mile course, the Chargers easily won the team title with 20 points,

well ahead of runnerup Salesian's 62.

Altogether, Edison placed four runners in the top five with its fifth man finishing seventh. With that kind of tight grouping, the Chargers seem a good bet to improve on last year's eighth place in the 4A finals. Foothill, another county power, won its division, but overall times were well over what Edison produced.

Western was an impressive winner in its debut with 19 points to drub Long Beach Poly (32) and Savanna (64) in a triangular last week. Poly generally field a representative team, and off that victory, Western may prove to be a pleasant surprise for Big-A cross country fans.