

by Denise Tom
Staff Writer

Unheralded Pioneer in harrier nationals

Hayward--You could call Michele Aubuchon the forgotten runner.

Aubuchon, of Hayward State, has qualified for the AIAW cross country nationals Saturday in Denver and is the only other East-bay female to make it except for the University of California team.

Because Cal turned out to be the surprise team of the year with an unbeaten record and recent No. 2 national ranking, the name Aubuchon has been lost in the excitement.

As one Cal harrier said when Aubuchon's name came up, "Who?"

The fact that the soft-spoken sophomore comes from a, heaven forbid, non-scholarship school, adds even more to her anonymity even though it finished second in the Golden State Conference this season.

Aubuchon was among the top 10 individual finishers at the recent western regionals in Long Beach, qualifying her for the nationals. She came in ninth.

She was surprised the flat, grassy 5,000-meter course was so easy. But she was even more amazed at her finish, considering she was up against 149 other runners, almost double that of last year.

The delicate-looking 19-year-old is far from that. Last week she ran 50 miles. And she ~~can~~ looks fragile because she ~~lost~~ dropped 25 pounds since she began running.

A schoolmate of Livermore High's Cheri Williams, who holds the state and national high school girls' two-mile records, Aubuchon was the state meet two-miler when Williams was a junior.

Although they used to run a lot together, Aubuchon said "it was depressing. I felt I could never get to first ahead of her."

She'll be trying once more, since Williams, now a freshman on the University of Oregon team, will also make a Denver appearance.

Unlike many top runners, Aubuchon does not like competition. She would rather run by herself for herself than against others.

A former swimmer specializing in freestyle, she got her start in competition at weekly meets and especially in 1976 when she made the junior nationals and nationals. Even then, she didn't like it.



Michele Aubuchon is beginning to leave anonymity behind

felt like throwing up," she said. "It got so bad that I'd go stiff."

Aubuchon had only taken up swimming on her doctor's advice. She had always wanted to run, but because of a leg disease which she was told she would outgrow by 16, she was advised to swim instead.

After five years, she got tired of rising at 5 a.m. to drive an hour to Alameda for her five-hour daily workout, so she quit.

A medical technology student, Aubuchon had no thoughts at all of trying out for Hayward's cross country team after a poor season last year at Chico State.

By Coach Bob McGuire

Aubuchon in Nationals

Denver... Nov. 18, 1977

Completing her first full season of XC, Michelle AUBUCHON finished 132nd out of 247 runners in the National AIAW Championships in Denver. Altitude may have been a factor following a rapid 5:33 first mile (80th place) but this was a problem that the majority of the field had to come to grips with. Sagging off to a 12:06 two mile time (121st), Michelle did not fall apart as she maintained fairly well to negotiate the 5000 meter distance in 19:11.4. The winner, Colorado's Mary Decker ran an amazing sub-17 min. race, winning in 16:59.4. To show how bunched the finishers were, there was a 15 second spread between 115th and 140th places. ... Out of the 29 region 8 runners in this race, Michelle finished 16th... an improvement of 8 places over her 24th place in the regionals. All in all... a good effort and a very important initial step in the development of a most promising runner.

ing to build a base if she wanted to join the track team next spring.

So she agreed, figuring McGuire knew what he was talking about since he was also the track coach.

Aubuchon prefers track to cross country.

"It's not boring to me like it is to a lot of other people. At least you know how far a mile is."

She doesn't think her chance of placing at the nationals are very good.

But, then again, what does she know? She never thought she'd be running cross country this year much less competing against the