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SPORTS

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
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SACRAMENTO, CA . . . The Mount San Antonio College (MT. SAC) Cross Country Invitational is more than just another event for cross country athletes. Dave Shannon, El Camino College men's cross country coach and president of the California Track Coaches Association, aptly describes it, "the barometer for the season." Each year any coach curious to know exactly where his team fits into the statewide picture schedules the prestigious event. Top teams from Northern and Southern California, as well as Arizona and other outlying states, converge on Walnut, California, to tackle the hilly flow of the three-mile course.

To put the annual event into perspective, 17 of the past 20 MT. SAC Invitational team champions, barring subsequent injury or illness, have gone on to win the California Community Colleges State Cross Country Team Championships. You get the picture, win the MT. SAC Invitational and become the instant favorite for the State Cross Country title.

The following is a brief statewide view of cross country for fall 1984 as California community college teams prepare for the State Championships to be held in Fresno on November 17.

If the aforementioned streak extends through this year, the Grossmont College men's team will win the title at Fresno's Woodard Park. The Griffins, winners of their last 53 consecutive dual meets, out-distanced defending men's state champion El Camino 41-73 at MT. SAC for their third invitational team championship this year. Grossmont, the perennial Southern California champion of the past decade, may win its 11th team title in 13 years.

Other teams in Southern California that have legitimate chances to win the men's team title include Metropolitan (Metro) Conference champion El Camino, Western State Conference champion Taft, plus Pasadena, Santa Ana, MT. SAC, and MiraCosta--provided the latter three survive regional competition.

Over the years, cross country teams in Southern California have dominated Northern California teams, but common meetings this year indicate the gap is closing fast.

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Monterey Peninsula College of the Coast Conference, under the direction of Coach Bill Campbell, has a "decided edge with West Valley a solid second," says Men's Coach Al Baeta, American River College (ARC). ARC, with six Northern California championship awards in its trophy case, has advanced to the state championships during each of the past 20 seasons, making it the most successful Northern California cross country program ever.

Other community colleges in Northern California currently competing for a spot in the state championships include San Joaquin Delta, Shasta, Fresno, Allan Hancock, and San Jose.

While men's races tend to be predictable every year, women's cross country teams seem to be more competitively balanced.

Santa Monica College of the Metro Conference in Southern California needed every ounce of effort to hold off San Diego Mesa 103-105 at the MT. SAC Invitational. East Los Angeles College of the Inland Valley Conference and host MT. SAC finished fourth and fifth in the large-college division. Those teams, along with Santa Ana, Bakersfield, Citrus, and defending state champion MiraCosta must be considered legitimate contenders.

Foothill College in Northern California has earned the respect of cross country coaches in the region by demolishing opponents at every chance, but an impressive third-place finish by West Valley College in the women's large-school division at MT. SAC has improved the Vikings' chances considerably. The third-place finish by West Valley was the single best performance by any Northern California women's team in the large-school division.

Both Foothill and West Valley compete in the Golden Gate Conference, which ultimately may prove unfortunate for De Anza. Based on regular season records, each conference sends two representatives to regional postconference competition.

Additional colleges with better-than-average chances in the State Championships include MT. SAC Invitational second- and third-place finishers College of the Sequoias and Yuba, plus American River, San Mateo, Sacramento City, and San Joaquin Delta.

COUNTRY NOTES: Postconference competition for cross country begins November 9. Orange Coast College (OCC) will host the Southern Regional at Irvine Regional Park. OCC Cross Country Coach Gordie Fitzel will be the tournament manager. The Northern Regional will be at College of San Mateo on November 10. Sierra College Cross Country Coach Gary Judd will be the tournament manager. The State Championships will be held on November 17 at Fresno's Woodard Park. Fresno City College Cross Country Coach Bob Fries will be the tournament director. See you there!