

Early season welcomes runners

by Dale Friedley
Flambeau sports editor

Getting an early start and then concentrating on the quality meets, the Florida State cross country team opens its season on September 23 when the Seminole five travel to the Alabama Invitational Meet.

Head coach Dick Roberts explained the team's new policy toward the cross country season as one that is rapidly becoming popular with programs across the nation.

"We are not in any way trying to phase out the cross country team," said Roberts of the changes. "We're just going to participate in fewer meets, with a little time between each one, and then run basically in only the larger ones."

Describing this year's distance experts, Roberts called the team "top-heavy" with talent as the Tribe has in its camp two of the best long yardage runners in the south.

Most notable of the returning runners is Del Ramers who was a finalist in the NCAA three-mile event last season and finished higher than any other Tribe member in national competition.

"Del will be back for his senior year and I hope he's going to show even more improvement," said Roberts. "He stayed in Tallahassee this summer with a job and was able to train a lot."

The other top runner on this year's team is Bobby Brooks, a former high school state champion from St. Petersburg. With the combination of Brooks

and Ramers, Roberts said that FSU has the two all-time best high school distance runners in Florida history.

After Brooks, however, the question marks and depth problem become apparent. The No. 3 man is Brad Thorpe who sat out last year because of the transfer rule but will be eligible for his junior year of running this time around. Thorpe was a high school teammate of Brooks at Northeast High in St. Petersburg.

The fourth starter on the squad this time is Bobby James from Milton who was the state cross country and two-mile champion last season in his division of high school competition.

Then the problems come as Roberts, as this time, only has one other man on the roster in Larry Campbell. He is a former

freshman basketball player who went out for track and found distance running to be his best event. At this time, he holds down the No. 5 spot on the varsity roster.

One question mark that Roberts hopes comes through is Gary Funkhauser, a brilliant high school runner from Largo.

Funkhauser, who could make the Seminole five easily, is having eligibility problems at this time and it is not known whether he will be able to participate this season or not.

"We have a definite lack of depth," said Roberts of the team, "but it is a group that has

good talent and if we are able to come up with a fifth man, we should have a good season."

As of now, the Tribe has only four regular meets scheduled, including the Alabama meet, the annual contest at Calloway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Ga. on October 21 and the dual meet with Florida on the University Golf Course during the morning of October 28.

By far the highlight of the season, however is the Tribe's own Seminole Invitational meet that is scheduled for October 7 and will feature most of the better teams from around the Southeast.

Held on the Tribe's home course, the meet is set for 10:30 a.m. before the Seminole football team takes the field against Florida in its big game at Campbell Stadium.

Already planning to take part in the invitational are Florida, Alabama, Auburn, South Alabama, Troy State and Baptist College. The teams are set to participate on a five mile course that winds through the fairways of the golf course.