

Siler, Gonzales head young distance squad

By Doug Vaughan
Of The Print

With every team member in their first year of eligibility, the women's cross country team was not expected to dominate their competitors. But what is expected and what happens is not always the same.

"Considering that most of our competition has been four-year schools, we have done an outstanding job," Coach Marilyn Wynia said. "We have been matched up against some tough schools (University of Oregon, Willamette, University of Washington) and I think it will help us when we go to Regionals."

The problem is not only that the Cougars have faced a majority of universities, but also as a team they do not have any college running experience.

The only two academic sophomores that Wynia's crew has did not run cross country last year. Leading the team through their first three meets have been a pair of freshmen.

Julie Siler, a Gold Beach product, has been the top placer in two of the first three Cougar outings. In the most recent competition she placed seventh in a 11-team field with a 18:19 (3.1 miles) at the Willamette Invitational Oct. 7.



OFF AND RUNNING—Freshman Maria Gonzales and Julie Siler are among lead pack at Willamette Invitational.

The other freshman that has led the Cougar forces is local prospect, Maria Gonzales, from Milwaukie. Gonzales paced the Cougs in their first meet of the year, University of Portland Invitational,

with a 22:27 (3.3 miles) run, placing 14th in the 50-runner field.

Inexperience is not looked at as only a negative aspect by Wynia. Even though it does hurt her team, she is not using

it as an excuse for anything.

"We are going to have a whole 'nother year together," Wynia said. "They are just starting to get a feel for what a 5000 meter race is all about. It is a little different than high school."

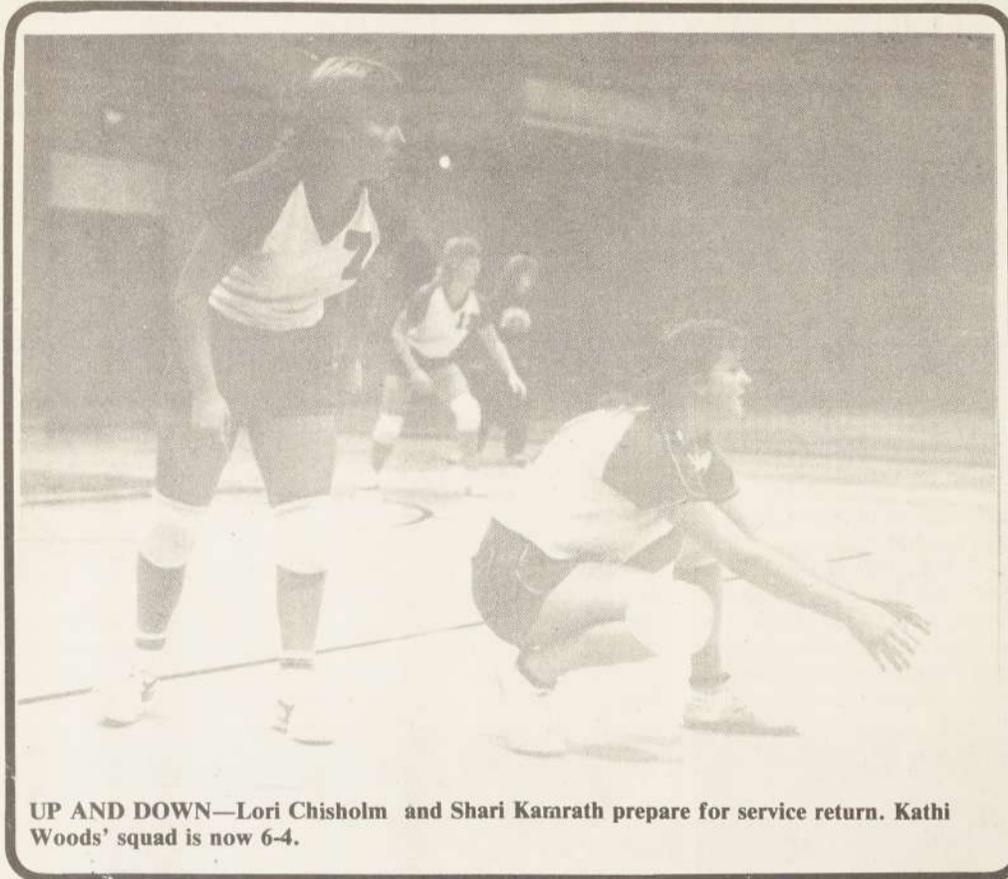
With the recent dose of four-year school competition, Wynia feels her team will be ready when it comes to Regionals. And her prediction shows it.

"This (heavy competition) will tone us up for Regionals," Wynia said. "We should do very well at

Regionals as long as everyone remains healthy, and that remains to be seen."

With the highlight of the season (Regionals) just three weeks away Wynia feels her team is where they have to be at this point. At this point, the team's downfall seems to be pacing themselves, and then knowing when to make their move, but Wynia said that will come with time.

The Cougar runners are idle this weekend, before competing in either a home meet or at the University of Portland meet Oct. 22.



UP AND DOWN—Lori Chisholm and Shari Kararath prepare for service return. Kathi Woods' squad is now 6-4.

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