

Sullivan takes big shoes south to make tracks at Auburn U.

By Doug Vaughan
Of The Print

Head cross country and assistant track coach at Clackamas Community College, Kelly Sullivan, has stepped down from his positions, but stepped up the ladder of collegiate athletics.

"I hate to leave...I think the community college level is very important."

Sullivan, who has built both the cross country and track programs into highly respected teams, recently announced his acceptance of a coaching position at Auburn University in Alabama.

The four-year Cougar mentor will assume the head cross country position and distance coach for Auburn's track team. He is overwhelmed at the opportunity.

"I think it will be a really good opportunity for me. I hate to leave, but it is an opportunity that I just can't pass up," Sullivan said.

One of Sullivan's reasons for leaving Clackamas was his lay-off from his student activities position in November. He admitted having several other coaching offers, but Auburn stood out.

Sullivan ran for the Clackamas cross country and track teams from 1975-1977 and qualified for nationals in both during the 1976-77 season.

From here, he continued his education at Willamette University in Salem. In his two years there he was an NAIA All-American both years.

After graduating, Sullivan proceeded back to the College, where in January 1980 he was named assistant track coach. In July of the same year, he was appointed head cross country coach.

In his four years as a Cougar coach, Sullivan's accomplishments have piled up. In all four years, he was named cross country Region 18 Coach of the Year, while the Cougars were regional champs each season.

As head cross country boss, Sullivan's teams have fared well at the national level. In 1982, his squad placed second, while in 1981 and 1983 they placed fourth nationally. In his first year, he guided his team to a tenth place nationally.

As assistant track coach, Sullivan has built one of the top programs in the West. In the past two seasons, the Cougs have been conference runners-up, and in 1982 they were conference champs.

In 1982 and 1983, his troops placed ninth and sixth, respectively, at nationals. Sullivan's last meet as a Cougar boss will be this year's national meet in San Angelo, Tex., May 17-19.

In his four years at the College, 15 Cougars have been named All-Americans and 23 have placed at nationals.

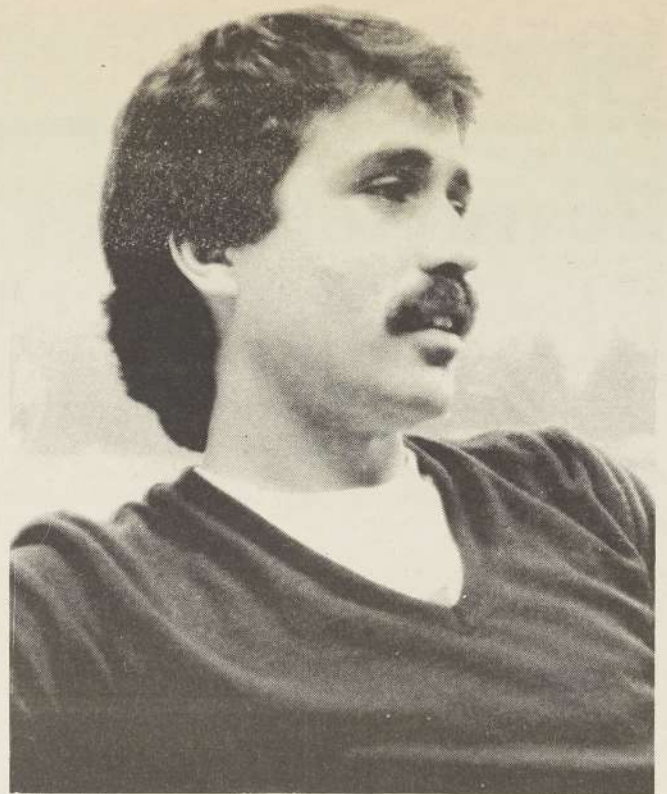
"I am really proud of the program that Les Tipton, Buck Monroe and myself have put together here," Sullivan said. "We have brought excellent student athletes from all around to the College, and I just hope that people in the community have appreciated it."

Sullivan will take four sophomore Cougars with him to the southern university. Distance aces Brian Abshire, Matt Parker, John Hansen and Yul Provancha all have elected to follow Sullivan to Auburn.

"Having those kids follow me down here means a lot to me. You always think that the kids like you, but for them to actually continue with you is really special," Sullivan said.

The newly appointed coach is especially proud to have distance premier Brian Abshire elect Auburn as the school to finish his collegiate career.

"Brian is one of the top



Kelly Sullivan

File Photo

recruits in the nation right now. Basically, he can go anywhere he wants. For him to go with me makes me feel really good," he said.

Although Sullivan is looking forward to a new adventure, he looks back to Clackamas with admiration and hopes the program will stay at the level it has been built up to.

"I just hope the program continues at the level it is now and progresses in the future. I

would hate to think that all the time we have put in will go to waste. We (the track and cross country programs) have a very good reputation. I hope the community supports it," Sullivan said.

Continuing with his thought, he explained, "I really hate to leave Clackamas. I think the community college level is very important. If it wouldn't have been for my lay-off I would have stayed here for a few more years."

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