Talent, Dedication Key for XC
By Emily Bauman
Staff Writer

While the majority of EMU students are snoozing peacefully on a typical Saturday morning, a special group of people spend the wee hours sweating, striving and achieving.

During the course of a week a cross country runner may run about 35-40 miles. The workouts vary from long repetitions of the half-mile and mile, power circuits, which are strength workouts that incorporate a variety of shorter distances; and finally a long distance run where the team ventures out onto the winding roads, covering distances of six to 11 miles in a session.

At 6:15 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays these dedicated individuals run for 45 minutes. Finally on Saturdays, they face a race which consists of 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) for women and 8 kilometers (5 miles) for men.

Co-captain Andrea Good, an optimist about the challenge that running provides and the people she meets, describes cross country as a “stress reliever.” According to coach Lester Zook, “Most college level runners run because they love to run and are talented at that sport, or they seek a challenge that will require nothing else but their best.” This pattern of excellence is prevalent in the academic life of the runners as well as the cross country course. According to Zook, “The average GPA of a cross country runner is anywhere from 3.6 to 4.0.”

Cross country is a sport which requires dedicated achievers who are internally motivated by desire for excellence. Unlike many other sports such as soccer or basketball, cross country is a sport that doesn’t attract a large number of spectators. Therefore, team members rely on encouragements like the “secret sneakers,” a type of covert buddy system, or the power tee shirts which remind the runners and everyone of the team that “we did it on Tuesdays on the back, and most importantly, on the praise and support of fellow teammates.

Although cross country is seen by many as an individual sport, according to Zook it is “a team sport in every sense of the word. There is no other sport where team members do the exact same thing.” Throughout the race, runners will run within the same forest trail, the same roadway, and merciless hill as their teammates and competitors. “During the race there is a sense of solidarity and identification with others that no other sport can match,” Zook explained.

This season, Zook feels optimisitic about the women’s squad. “We have a very nature women’s team with a lot of depth,” he said. Three of the runners were part of the conference-winning team of last year. Senior Andrea Good, who won the event.

Hertzler, Wendy Driver, co-captain Emily Huffman, Ashley Lantz, Josh Ott, Kevin Beachy, Meredith Blauch provide the support a competitive team needs for success. One of the hopes for Hertzler is for the Lady Royals to win the event. “We have quite the same depth, but this year, as well as enjoy her final year of running cross country,” she stated.

The men’s squad does not have quite the same depth, but solid performers sustain the small team. Justin Hawkins, who dropped two minutes from his personal record of last year, Eric Lantz, Josh Ott, Kevin Beachy, Caleb Vodicka, and Nate Harder round out the men’s team.

Two first-year students are now trying to change that. Together, Alexis Sauder and Stephanie Miller started a lacrosse team at their high school and have not had the opportunity to compete at the collegiate level.

Several Eastern Mennonite University students played lacrosse in high school, but have not had the opportunity to compete at the collegiate level. Two first-year students are now trying to change that. Together, Alexis Sauder and Stephanie Miller started a lacrosse team at their high school and are now attempting a similar feat at EMU as well.

The first-year duo is waiting to meet with Paul Johnson, who said his role is “to help them fill out all the paperwork.” Sauder, a member of the SGA, hopes to convince the administration to pass a proposal to give EMU their first lacrosse team. According to Johnson, if the SGA approves it, the President’s Cabinet will vote on whether or not to grant lacrosse club status at EMU. With club status and adequate support, the team could become a varsity team in a few years.

Sauder is optimistic after receiving positive remarks from fellow students around campus. “There is a lot of interest from the people we have talked to so far,” she stated. Kristen Shoemaker, another enthusiastic supporter, commented that it would be fun.

Sauder and Miller have found a few coaching candidates, most with playing experience. A lacrosse team requires at least 16 players, according to Miller, but she feels there will be enough interest to surpass that. In fact, the lacrosse team might draw as many as 24 players.

Unfortunately, there are plenty of obstacles to overcome besides passing proposals and raising interest. Lacrosse is not a cheap sport. Players will need sticks and safety equipment to compete. Furthermore, pricey lacrosse goals will need to be purchased.

Miller hopes to cover these costs in the same way her high school did: by receiving a grant. Plans for fundraisers are in the works as well as the team hopes that people in the community will lend a helping hand.

Another problem that EMU lacrosse might face is where to play. One possibility that has been given serious consideration

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Thursday, Sept. 26
• “Couples Encounter” in Lehman Auditorium. 7:30 p.m.
• Softball at Bridgewater, VA, 4:30 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 27
• Chapel in Lehman. “Learning Spanish,” with Father Ken Woods. 10:00 a.m.
• Field Hockey v. Washington & Lee, Home, 4:30 p.m.
• “Lilo & Stitch” in SC 106. 10:00 p.m.
• Late night bowling. Vans leave outside UC. 12:30 a.m.

Saturday, Sept. 28
• (M) Tennis at Ferrum Tournament, 9:00 a.m.
• Cross Country at Roanoke Invitational, Salem, VA 10:30 a.m.
• Field Hockey v. Virginia Wesleyan, Home, 1:00 p.m.
• (W) Soccer v. Virginia Wesleyan, Home, 1:00 p.m.
• (M) Soccer at Randolph-Macon, Ashland, VA 3:00 p.m.
• “Lilo & Stitch” in SC 106. 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 29
• Celebration in the Martin Chapel. 9:00 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 30
• Chapel in Lehman. “Worship service.” 10:00 a.m.
• Softball v. Southern Virginia, Home, 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 30
• (W) Soccer at Bridgewater, VA, 4:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 30
• Chapel in Lehman. “Student-led hymn sing.” 10:00 a.m.
• (M) Soccer v. Lynchburg College, Home, 4:00 p.m.
• Field Hockey v. Randolph-Macon, Home, 7:00 p.m.

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is to use the varsity practice fields.
While Miller that they are unsure about where they could play, she is more worried about being granted club status.

Despite many challenges to overcome, the right moves could provide EMU with a quality squad in the near future.
"It will take a lot of hard work, but my high school team became respectable in just two years, an achievement I hope will repeat here at EMU," said Sauder. "Lacrosse is an 'addictive' sport that is well worth the time and effort to get started. It is an experience that will change you."