

Track team back for one year

by Randal Smathers

U of A track is off and running again — for now. Last year, the Department of Athletics decided it could not afford to fund its track and field and cross-country teams, however, the athletes have kept going as a club, and may be reinstated for this year as a team.

According to Dr. Robert Steadward, Chairman of the Department of Athletics, he is currently working on a "formal request to Canada West and the CIAU", to reinstate track for this year.

The change seems to be motivated by the creation of the new Track and Field Provincial Development Center on campus, but the track team deserves credit as well.

"We've been lobbying to get the team back," said Rick Chamney, Vice-President of the U of A Track Club, an organization formed largely from ex-team members and hopefuls. The club has also "spent the last year maintaining interest" in track on campus, said Chamney, which included hosting the Track Club

Open (formerly the Golden Bear Open), which drew 100 - 200 fans, 600 athletes, and raised \$1500 for the club.

Ironically, the Development Center is designed to help younger athletes develop, which would raise the quality of the athletes at the university level, but Alberta is losing athletes because the team is going unfunded.

"We've lost three top-level people, who are no longer attending U of A," said Chamney, "and one more, who was going to come here, who finished fifth at the World Junior Championships, has taken a scholarship in Oregon instead. These are inter-provincial, national class athletes."

Despite these efforts, it is unclear as to whether the governing bodies will allow the U of A back into competition this year.

"Normally when a team is withdrawn, there is a two-year minimum before they are allowed back in to Canada West as a team," said Steadward, "and I'm asking for an exception to be

made."

The "stumbling block", as Steadward sees it, is the fact that Athletics is only willing to commit to one year of participation, at which time they want to review the costs and benefits of the program, before they commit to a longterm participation.

"We want to see how this works out the first year," said Steadward, "Our budget is already set, so the athletes will have to raise their own money this year, but we couldn't continue to offer the program with the athletes paying their own way. We would have to make it an integral part of our program and find the funding for it."

Chamney said that the club has budgeted \$10,000 for the year's

"We couldn't continue to offer the program with the athletes paying their own way." — Steadward

expenses, but he also said that was a "very liberal budget, which included sending a full team of 40 athletes and coaches to major meets. He expects 10-12 to be at the interprovincial level, with a realistic shot at making the CIAU's.

Calgary, who also cut their track program last year, have been reinstated, but they have not put a one-year condition on their team. Calgary is also opening a development center this year.

The U of A is providing facili-



Paul Menzies

'Tis but a scratch!

Pat Stiles (left) is "stabbed" by fellow Golden Blade Mike Oshai at a fencing open house on Thursday.

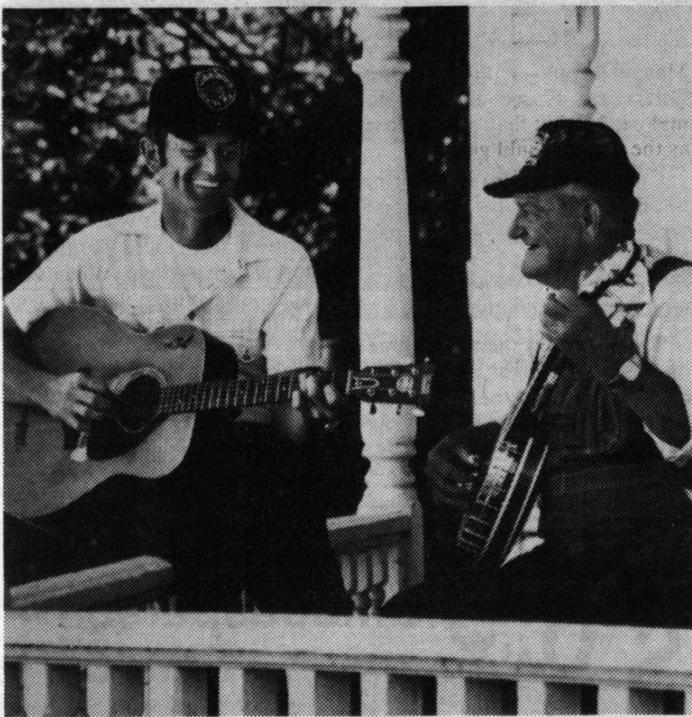
ties at no cost for the Development Center, with the Alberta Sport Council and Athletics Alberta, the provincial arm of the Canadian Track and Field Association, providing the cash. Steadward will announce the identities of the coaches next week.

Janet Shulha, Technical Director for Athletics Alberta, said that the re-instatement of Bear/Panda track will, along with the Development Center, provide Alberta athletes with the "top-level" program they have been

missing for the last year. She said it was especially hard on the field athletes, as well as some of the short- and middle-distance runners, because "the national level programs have stayed the same, and University sports provided the step before national level."

Athletics Alberta and the University are currently negotiating to make the Development Center and U of A track team permanent institutions.

"We're confident they both will be there (in the long term)," said Shulha.



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