

For immediate release

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WOSC Names Former OU All-American as its New Cross Country Coach

ALTUS, Okla. – Western Oklahoma State College (WOSC) is excited to announce the hiring of Coach Rick Carpenter as the new Head Coach of the men and women’s Cross Country coach, a new program that will begin in fall 2022.

Athletic Director, Matt Cartwright announced that Rick Carpenter, a two-time all-American in the indoor mile and the 1975 cross country captain and 1976 track captain at the University of Oklahoma, has agreed to accept the head coach position. “We are excited to bring a new program to Western Oklahoma State College. Cross Country will give another opportunity for student-athletes to compete at a high level and gain a high-level education at the same time. Western is excited for the future of this program and for the student-athletes that are building an excellent running program in southwest Oklahoma. We couldn't be more excited to have Rick on board leading the program in that direction,” said Cartwright.

Carpenter, 67, who is retired and living in Colorado, recently served as the editor and publisher of The Altus Times and the Frederick Press-Leader. He served as an assistant cross country and assistant swimming coach in Moore, Oklahoma while teaching English at Highland East Middle School in 1979. While Highland East, he was also training for the 1980 Olympics. At that time, amateur athletes could not accept money for coaching a sport in which he or she competed. Cross country running is not an Olympic event.

When his journalism career took off, Carpenter abandoned his formal coaching to focus on his journalism profession. However he continued to make time to continue to advise a number of high school and college runners. He said he's been a student of different training methods and has tried most of them before settling on his current approach.

While competing, Carpenter set individual school records at OU in the indoor mile and the 3,000-meter steeplechase while also joining teammates to set school records in the indoor distance medley and the outdoor 4-mile relay. His best time in the mile was 4:05 his junior year at OU before an injury kept him from being competitive his senior year.

Carpenter wants to build a program with local athletes. He said southwest Oklahoma has talented runners who he hopes to recruit and develop into nationally-ranked competitors. He attended Altus High School’s Bob Hart Invitational and said he saw runners with as much or more talent than he had and could develop into top runners.

In 1972, Carpenter was the only Oklahoma high school runner to qualify for the National Junior Olympics. Twelve athletes from across the country qualified in each event. He finished fifth in the mile in 4:18.3. He also finished second in state in the 2-mile run in 9:35 that year, competing for US Grant High School in Oklahoma City.

Carpenter attended Butler County Community College in Kansas his freshman year where he won the regional cross country meet and finished fourth in the 2-mile in 9:15 and fifth in the mile in 4:16 at the NJCAA National Indoor Championships in 1973. He transferred to OU his sophomore year.

“I understand the value of a junior college education,” he said. “They enrolled me in remedial English and reading classes, and a journalism professor took me under his wings and convinced me I could become a writer, although my first love was photography,” said Carpenter. He also said becoming an avid reader transformed his life and helped him become an award-winning journalist.

Carpenter had a summer internship as a photographer with Sports Illustrated and Time magazines in 1975 where he traveled with legendary photographer Rich Clarkson for whom ESPN has produced a documentary. He later was a personal writer in Washington, D.C. for US Senator Alan Simpson of Wyoming, then went on to own newspapers in Colorado and Oklahoma.

Most recently, Carpenter and OU classmate Larry Miller were equal partners in Graystone Media Group, LTD, which owned newspapers in Durant, Frederick, Altus and Mangum. They sold the company last year.

Carpenter encourages local athletes to contact him about competing for WOSC. He said building a solid base during summer months produces the kind of competitors he hopes to develop. For more information about the program email coach at crosscountry@wosc.edu.

Western Oklahoma State College is the oldest original municipal two-year college still in existence in the State of Oklahoma. Its mission is to provide high quality education, support student success, and empower individuals to become productive members of local, regional and global communities. Western offers high-quality associate degrees and certificates to students in its five-county service area and beyond. For more information, visit wosc.edu.

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