

# Coach expects another successful season

By Kayla Cornett

Colby Free Press  
colby.sports@nwksas.com

James Ortiz may not look like your average college sports coach, but he has had a lot of success coaching the men's cross country and track teams at Colby Community College over the past two years.

"You know, a lot of people are just intrigued by a one-legged man coaching cross country," Ortiz said. "It's just ironic to get into an accident and the only thing I lose is a leg. No scratches or scars, just a leg."

Coach Ortiz was a successful runner at Texas State University, but in the summer before his fifth year, his running career was cut short. He lost his right leg after being run over by a garbage truck while riding his bicycle to class in 2006. Since then, he has not been able to run like he used to.

Despite this setback, Ortiz said he'd love to be able to run competitively again someday, but coaching is more important right now.

"I just think there's 25 to 30 guys I'd like to put ahead of that," he said. "They're my main concern."

At 23 years old, Ortiz became a college head coach at the University of the Southwest in Hobbs, N.M. He stayed there for two years before coming to Colby.

Now, he is entering his third season with Colby, and in that time, his cross country and track teams have become outstanding, especially last season.

His men's team finished 11th nationally in cross country, second in the Jayhawk Conference, and third in the region. All three places were the best finish in the school's Division I history. The half-marathon team finished eighth nationally with indoor track and field placing 15th, and outdoor track and field finishing 23rd.

Also, eight of his athletes were recognized as National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) All-Americans. Two student-athletes earned NJCAA Academic All-American status.

Then, Ortiz's half-marathon



GARRET JONES/Colby Community College

Former Colby Community College runner Stevorn Richards and Coach James Ortiz talked in April after the 400-meter run at the Hutch Night Relays track and field meet in Hutchinson. Stevorn accepted a scholarship to run for Southern University in Louisiana

team swept the NJCAA Academic Team-of-the-Year award, earning first-place honors with the highest team grade point average.

In addition, the NJCAA Coaches' Association selected Colby's track quad as the Academic Team-of-the-Year. The association named 11 athletes as Academic All-Americans.

One of Ortiz's stand-out cross country runners was Edward Limo from Kenya. He took first place at the Oklahoma State University Cowboy Jamboree last September, and took second place at the NJCAA Region VI Championships.

"When we brought in Edward, we didn't know he was going to be that fantastic," Ortiz said. "In Kenya, Edward wasn't one of the best, but we liked his potential and that's why we picked him. And even Edward will tell you that this year has been a big learning year because he hasn't had a lot of running experience."

Ortiz said that Limo just decided one day when he was 20 years old that he was going to start running; he didn't even have any high school running experience. But Ortiz said you just never know who's going to be a shining star.

When recruiting new athletes

for a community college, there are a few obstacles that Ortiz experiences, such as the college being far away from some athlete's homes and Colby being a small city.

"I tell my recruits 'There's not a lot to do out here but you can focus on your academics and you can focus on your athletics because there's nothing to do,'" he said.

However, Ortiz said one of the biggest selling points when recruiting is that he has the results that show that they can com-

pete against and beat Division I schools.

"I think that's one of the good things about cross country," he said. "We can race whoever we please."

Ortiz has recruited runners from all over the country and the world this year. He has runners coming from Australia, Mexico, the Bahamas, Florida, New Jersey, Tennessee and Texas, just to name a few. He said it's not easy to recruit international runners, though, because it's all about who you know.

"To me, that was one of the hardest things about being a young coach," Ortiz said. "I never imagined in my life that I would be a college coach at 23 years old. But I think coaches and people will catch on if you're doing things right, and they'll keep relationships with you if you're doing things right."

"Everyone's here to help each other out because everyone wants to be the best. As long as you keep being successful, then people are gonna keep working with you. But I think that's one thing that I've been lucky to have is success, and people answer my phone calls."

This year, Ortiz is expecting 14 cross country recruits, but said he won't know for sure until everyone shows up. He said he still has a good group of guys coming back from last year that really helped turn the program around.

"That's the best thing about a junior college: it only takes one recruiting class to turn a program around and that's what that recruiting class was last year, and they knew it because we did have fantastic results," Ortiz said. "I said 'Listen, you guys are gonna be the guys to turn this around' and that's what they wanted to do."

"The old guys are coming back because they want to continue leading this program in the right direction and the new guys are coming in because they want to be a part of it. Assuming everyone shows up, it's gonna be a great year. I mean I wouldn't expect anything different."

His team will begin this year's journey with its first meet Saturday, Sept. 9, in Colby. There will be four to five teams, including Garden City, which is the team's biggest (but also friendly) rival.

Garden City won the Jayhawk Conference last year and placed second in the region while Colby came in third.

"Actually, we had never beaten Garden City until last year in Hays," Ortiz said. "But that fact that we've done it once, I think it's motivated my guys. I think first off for them, it's not just an assumption that they can beat Colby now."

Ortiz said he and his team are looking forward to this home meet.

"I would love, love, love to start the year off by winning this meet because that would mean we beat Garden City," he said. "To us, that's pretty important because we want to be the best in the West, but then again we want to be the best in the region and the best in the nation. But I know that's one of our goals, we've been talking about it."

In the end, Ortiz said he is just happy to be here and he expects that everyone will realize how good his team really is this season.

"I think the big thing I expect is I expect people to catch on," he said. "And when I say people, I mean other schools, other coaches, high school athletes, the community. It wasn't a fluke, I promise that it wasn't."

## Wildcats rebuild with transfers

By Dave Skretta

AP Sports Writer

MANHATTAN (AP) — Kansas State will be relying heavily on a pair of transfers and a wide receiver-turned-quarterback to continue the rebuilding job that Bill Snyder inherited a couple years ago.

Linebacker Arthur Brown and his brother, running back Bryce Brown, are eligible after sitting out a year under National Collegiate Athletic Association transfer guidelines. Arthur joins the program from Miami and Bryce comes from Tennessee, and both are looking forward to finally playing again when the Wildcats

open the season Sept. 3 against Eastern Kentucky.

Former receive Collin Klein is expected to take over for Carson Coffman and upgrade a passing attack that struggled mightily a

year ago.

The Wildcats are coming off a 7-6 season that included a 36-34 loss to Syracuse in the PinStripe Bowl.

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