



# West Valley VIEW

The community newspaper of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park & Tolleson, AZ  
Phone (623) 535-8439

Friday, July 30, 2010

## EMCC to have sports programs this year

*School starts with cross country, golf*

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Estrella Mountain Community College will have something extra to offer its students enrolling this year: sports.

For the first time since its opening in 1992, EMCC will have athletic programs. Men's and women's cross country starts in the fall while men's and women's golf begins next spring.

"For several years our students have been clamoring for us to get athletics of some sort," EMCC Athletic Director Herschel Jackson said. "We had a couple forums and the students voiced their opinions and our administration decided it would be a good thing to try to start it up."

Jeff Eccles

The process of submitting paperwork took about a year to finalize, but once it was official golf and cross country were decided upon as good start-up sports.

"With our campus being so new we don't have the onsite facilities to accommodate other sports," Jackson said. "Being new to the whole sports program thing, I think our administration felt it would be best to start small. Men's and women's cross country and men's and women's golf gives us that opportunity, and we don't have to have on site facilities to accommodate those athletics."

Coaching cross country is Carl Tichenor. He didn't sign a contract until May so his time to find athletes was limited. With practices beginning Monday he will be a little shorthanded, but he's not worried. Currently there are three guys and two ladies on the team. It takes five athletes per team to score in meets.

"I've communicated with pretty much all the west side high schools and athletic directors, and with our ongoing summer orientations and registration, I've been able to pick up some momentum," Tichenor said. "I really expect that the rest of the team will be formed from the current enrollment. As the word spreads through the registration process, I really think we're going to get a good number of people coming out."

The season kicks off Sept. 4 at Northern Arizona University with the George Kyte Invitational, leaving little time to prepare. The athletes on the team have already been working out though.

"We're allowed to have a limited offseason training, so some of the runners have been coming to campus on Saturdays and been on their own training regimen," Tichenor said. "Those people I spoke of are already getting mileage under them."

During the season the team will practice at Estrella Mountain Regional Park and White Tank Mountain Regional Park.

While things are a little slow right now, it's just the beginning stages of a brand new program. Tichenor knows it takes time to develop.

"Any time you start a new program there's a struggle to create the awareness and get the turnout, and even get the quality people to come out," he said. "I think as August unfolds, even though some of the runners may not be ready for that first race, by mid September and early October everybody is going to be doing OK."

## Golf

Golf will start in the spring with Jeff Eccles coaching the men's team and Joe Romaine the women's. Eccles has been the varsity boys coach at Westview High School for the past 14 years, while Romaine helped out on the girls team at Westview the last two years.

A course for the team to practice and host their home meets at has not yet been decided upon, but Jackson said it will definitely be a local one.

Both cross country and golf will be used as a building block for EMCC to see if further advancement can be made in athletics, Jackson said.

"Ideally, once we get these sports programs firmly established, maybe a year, two, three years from now, I hope we can keep these going strong and hopefully we can expand," Jackson said. "It depends on how the current sports go and a lot of it is budget. If there's money in the budget that will allow us to expand, then we'll take a look at it."

If any indoor or field sports were to be played at EMCC it would need enough money in its budget to build facilities on campus, since it has none currently. For now though, they'll enjoy what they've been given.

"It's exciting," Tichenor said. "This is an opportunity at the doorstep of these kids that may not have had opportunities to compete athletically . . . the sky's the limit I think. As soon as we can build a quality program, I think quality will attract quality and I think the future is bright for not only this year but the years ahead."

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