

Leonard Lee named Diné College head Harriers coach

Written by By Bernie Dotson Diné College Public Relations
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Littlewater, N.M., native stresses ‘greatness’

TSAILE, Ariz. — Leonard Lee hopes to end the coaching cyclone in the Diné College cross country program. Lee, a coaching veteran of more than 20 years, was brought aboard in mid-August to lead the Warriors as head cross country coach.

Lee, a graduate of Newcomb High School, located in San Juan County, met the 12-member team last week. The first cross country meet of the 2017 season is scheduled this month. Diné College participates in the United States Collegiate Athletic Association.

“We have some very good student athletes on our team,” Lee said. “I’m excited. They’re excited. There have been some great coaches who have come through here. I want to be a part of that. I stress effort, dedication and greatness to the team.”

Lee, who previously coached at the elementary level in Shiprock, Kirtland and Navajo Prep schools, is from Littlewater, N.M. He attended Diné College back in the late 1980s and has run the famed Boston Marathon at least once.

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THE 2017 DINE COLLEGE HARRIERS

On the team this year is sophomore Miranda Watchman. Watchman finished twentieth at Nationals last year at Virginia Beach, Va. Her twin sister, Jessica, finished one place ahead of Miranda at Virginia Beach. The Watchman's are from Red Valley, Ariz. Colin Frank finished fifteenth on the men's side at Nationals last year and just missed placing for All-America status by one spot. Lee was the assistant coach on last year's team.

"This year we have some very promising freshmen, like Melvin Etsitty from Round Rock, Ariz., and Chavez Jones of Chinle Ariz.," Lee said. "These two are very good runners. We look very good and we have been practicing very well," Lee said. Lee noted that Miken Draper of Chinle is a strong sophomore and fellow sophomore Alonzo Begay, also from Chinle, looks "pretty good."

DINE COLLEGE CROSS COUNTRY COACHING CYCLONE

Some of Diné College's past cross country coaches include Gavin Sosa, Lenny Esson and Shaun Martin. Martin, who is from Page, Ariz., and currently the athletic director at Chinle High School, is considered one of the best runners to come out of the Four Corners. Martin's 2014 Lady Warriors Diné College team brought home a first place title at the USCAA championships in Syracuse, N.Y. Eight Diné College runners earned All-America status under Martin. Sosa coached at Navajo Pine High School where he won several New Mexico titles.

A University of New Mexico graduate, Lee was the first district and state cross country champion from Newcomb High School in 1983. Lee went to the cross country Nationals three times in the 1990s.

Diné College Interim Athletic Director Fred Take noted that there remains a head coaching vacancy at Diné College for archery. He said the college is on a roll with the hiring of rodeo coach and Cornell University grad Heather Williams of Lukachukai, Ariz., and Lee.

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