

Old teammates pay tribute to former C.V. standout

■ Last year's men's three-mile winner Ernie Freer has decided not come back and defend his title in the Nor-Cal John Frank Memorial Run.

By David Benda
R-S sports reporter

For four straight years the Nor-Cal John Frank Memorial Run was dominated by former teammates of the man for whom the race was named after.

Then came 1990, and the stranglehold these former Oregon State runners had on both the three- and 10-mile event was broken when Hayfork's Ernie Freer took top honors in the three-mile race.

This year, Frank's old teammates are not about to let the same thing happen

again.

"What happened last year was that I just got off ankle surgery and wasn't really in shape," said Mark Fricker, who finished second behind Freer.

Fricker is one of four of Frank's old Oregon State teammates planning on competing at this year's event. They will join nearly 500 other runners at Saturday's starting line at Lake Redding Park.

Formerly called the Nor-Cal Run, the race was re-named in 1987 in honor of Frank, a 1980 Central Valley High graduate who died in an industrial accident in 1986. Frank was working on a subcontracting job in Yosemite National Park at the time of his death.

Fricker, who has won the three-mile race twice and the 10-mile event once, will compete in the 10-mile run. Fricker also holds the course record in the three-

mile, which he set in 1987 with a time of 13 minutes, 49 seconds. He qualified for the 1988 U.S. Olympic Trials in the 1,500 run.

Other old teammates and buddies of Frank signed up for the race are Karl Van Calcar and Gid Rysdam. Both will compete in the three-mile run. Rysdam has taken the 10-mile title once, while Van Calcar, who won last year's 10-mile run, won the 1988 NCAA title in the steeplechase.

"We like to spread ourselves out between the two races," Fricker said. "We kind of feel obligated to have at least one of us Beavers (Oregon State's mascot) win both the three- and 10-mile race.

"I'll tell you what, Karl is in excellent shape. He's going to be a real threat to break my three-mile record," Fricker said.

One force Van Calcar will not have to contend with this year is Freer, who has opted not to defend his title.

A 1984 graduate of Hayfork High, Freer said he has decided to run in a one-mile road race in Los Angeles instead this year.

"It was kind of exciting winning last year's event because Mark Fricker was my idol," Freer said, "so I really wanted to come back this year. I thought I was going to, but right now this is the best thing for me to do."

Proceeds from the race are used for scholarships for high school runners and include an additional donation to the John Frank Scholarship Fund.

After winning a state cross-country title, Frank received a scholarship to attend

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Oregon State. There he became the Beavers' No. 2 runner in cross country and No. 1 in track in the 1,500 and 5,000.

"One reason why we all come down here is that it's great opportunity for all us Oregon State runners to get together again and support something that's worthwhile," said Fricker, who lives outside of Portland, Ore.

"We feel we are part of the Frank family and we support them in this tough time," Fricker said. "One of the things I look forward to about coming down is the spaghetti feed we have the night before the race at the Frank's home."