**VTXCTF: Running to become national champions**

Every day at 6 p.m. the Virginia Tech Cross Country and Track and Field Club meet for practice at the Johnson-Miller Track Complex.

“When we practice, we have dedicated members who are ready to run and interact with friends and new runners,” said Phil Lopez, President of VTXCTF.

When Lopez joined the club, they were only about 15 to 20 members, and they could not field a team to compete at nationals. However, that number has exceedingly gone up to 120 members due to the influx of runners that have called Virginia Tech home for four years.

“It is crazy to see how many members we have because we were such a small club, now we have people who love our sport and people who are trying it for the first time,” said Alyssa McCaffrey, Women’s Distance Captain.

Members of the club can choose to be a racer or non-racer. Racers compete for the club in meets across the state while non-racers just join the club just to run with members. Other members can choose to be jumpers and throwers when track season begins

“Running just brings this group of people together. Some of them have been running since high school and want to continue to do it while in college,” McCaffrey said.

In practices, the distance teams run in groups where one runs three miles, the other group runs four miles, and the other group runs 5 miles. This is all about testing your limits and building up endurance and stamina.

During the Fall season, the club started placing second and third in their meets, but Lopez started to see something unique about this team.

“I felt that we were clicking and that we started to gain momentum as a club that would take us to the spring were I felt that if we did things the right way, we could become national champions when it is all over,” Lopez said.

 Wyatt Russell, Vice President of VTXCTF agreed with Lopez.

“I was a runner during the fall and when we started to second and third overall, members of the team were upset but confident heading into the Spring season,” Russell said.

When the Spring season came around, the team started to win and placed first in every meet leading up to the Spring nationals.

“It was a result of all are hard work that we put into the fall that carried over to the spring,” Russell said. Winning first place allowed our team to gain confidence.”

That confidence not only led them to nationals, but it also led to numerous club records being made. In total, 10 new club records were made in the Men’s 110M Hurdles, Men’s 5000M, Men’s 1500M, Men’s Triple Jump, Men’s 4X800 Relay, Men’s Javelin, Women’s Triple Jump, Women’s 5000M, Women’s 1500M, and Women’s Discus.

“Breaking those records was a phenomenal accomplishment by the people who set them,” said Lopez.

Due to many records being made the club was able to win nationals and accomplish something they could not have dreamed of when they were a smaller club.

“It feels like it all came full circle from the way the club was when I got here to where we are now it is pretty amazing to see how far we have come,” McCaffery said.

The club officially changed its name to what it is now due to winning nationals.

“Our club officers decided to change the name of the club because we felt that the name change accurately represents who we are as a club,” Lopez said. “We will always strive to uphold our club values to be a fun, inclusive environment and welcome athletes at all skill levels.”

The momentum from winning nationals has carried over to the Fall season. As the club has placed first in the two meets, they have had so far. Their next meet is on Oct. 15 which will be at Blacksburg High School. Lopez wants the team to continue to push forward because right now they are the team to beat.

“We just have to keep running, keep betting on ourselves because we have all the momentum in the world to continue to achieve success in our sport,” Lopez said.