

Athletes participate in CSU heart tests

Two Fort Collins area men, Dr. Ben Magsamen, an orthopedic surgeon, and Bill Messenger, a school teacher, were among 10 marathoners tested in Colorado State University's hypo-hyperbaric chamber in which scientists can simulate conditions from below sea level to 100,000 feet altitude.

The two are taking part in a study directed by Dr. H.L. Brammell, University of Colorado Medical Center in Denver, in cooperation with CSU and Dr. Max Morton, coordinator of CSU's cardiac rehabilitation program.

Main purpose of the study is to determine whether results from low-altitude exercise tests can predict a person's heart response at altitudes above 6,000 feet and to collect basic data on well conditioned athletes who perform at high altitude.

Brammell said he's trying to answer such questions as whether hunters who live at lower altitudes can be tested to predict their physical ability when they go into the mountains, or if laboratory test exercises at low altitudes can give medical clearance for exertion at high altitudes.

All 10 athletes — who were more than 30 years of age — were exercised in the CSU chamber at simulated altitudes of from 6,000 to 14,000 feet. Researchers monitored such things as heart rate, respiration volume, oxygen consumption and blood pressure of each person.

The same group of athletes had been tested previously in Brammell's laboratory in Denver and again in May during a 26-mile marathon run in Denver last month. In addition to the chamber tests at CSU, the men will be monitored when they run in the Pike's Peak marathon on Aug. 14.

Hopefully, Brammell said, after data from all these tests are tabulated, he will have clues to how such factors as physical stress, emotional stress and altitude figure into a person's response to exertion.