

Women, men prepare for MIAA meet

Women's cross country enters race ranked for first time since 2004

BY JACK NICHOLL
Sports Editor

For the first time since 2004, the No. 16 women's cross country team is nationally ranked.

The ranking is a compilation of top team finishes this season — three firsts and a third. At the GLVC/MIAA Challenge on Oct. 10, the Bulldogs defeated then-No. 17 Pittsburg State University by 32 points, and they finished just 18 behind No. 13 Southern Indiana University.

But all that is in the past.

As head coach John Cochrane said, anything can happen Saturday at the MIAA Championships in Emporia.

"In the running sports, it is a war every time we go to a conference meet," Cochrane said. "Whether it's indoor, outdoor, people really get after it, and everybody gets pumped up for it."

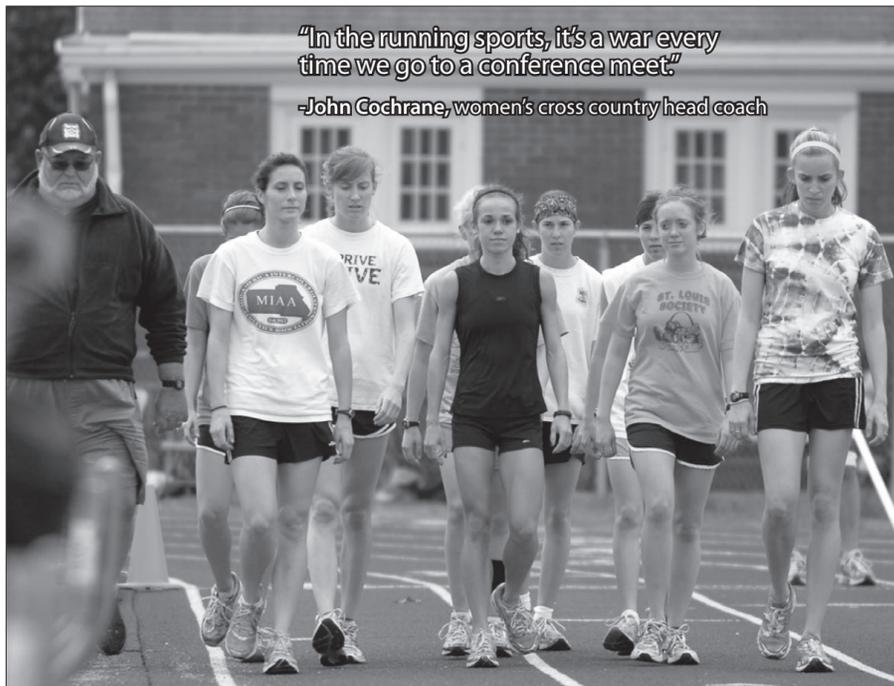
"Conference is the most important thing in the year for us."

Cochrane said four out of the first five runners need to have their best race of the season for the team to finish well.

The Bulldogs are taking the maximum of 10 runners to the meet. Their top competition is No. 3 Missouri Southern State University, which finished first at the GLVC/MIAA and is led by returning MIAA champion Kimi Shank. Sophomore Dani Dell'Orco, who was nowhere near Shank during track in the spring, finished just nine seconds behind her on Oct. 10.

"Definitely my goal is just to stay with her, run as close to her as I can," Dell'Orco said.

Southern is the favorite to re-



Head coach John Cochrane (left) walks down the track with the women's cross country team at practice yesterday. The No. 16 Bulldogs are one of three ranked teams heading into the MIAA meet this Saturday.

peat, and Cochrane said he would like to see Truman and Pitt State fight for the second spot at conference. The Bulldogs placed fourth in conference last season, and they have not finished in the top two since 2004.

Pitt held out its Nos. 1 and 6 runners at the GLVC/MIAA, but Cochrane said the Bulldogs still would have finished ahead.

"They have a tendency to run very well when they go to conference and nationals, so you have to factor that in," Cochrane said.

"In the running sports, it's a war every time we go to a conference meet."

-John Cochrane, women's cross country head coach

Like Truman, the Gorillas feature zero seniors in their top five runners. Dell'Orco has led the Bulldogs all season, followed by sophomores Anne Ratermann Michelle Gronemeyer and freshmen Cindy and Karen Grauel.

The Grauel sisters each have improved since the beginning of the season. Cindy dropped 19 seconds off her 5K time at the Miner Invitational on Sept. 5, and Karen dropped 41 seconds.

Neither Cindy nor Karen ran cross country before attending

Truman. Dell'Orco said the duo is constantly pushing each other in practices and in races they form a good pack with Ratermann and Gronemeyer.

"One thing I admire about them is that they're great," Dell'Orco said. "They're really fun to watch because they are such raw talent."

The lone senior for Truman is Fiona Williams, who has finished sixth twice for the 'Dogs.

"We would like to see that, because this is Fiona's last confer-

ence meet, maybe she will be the wild card," Cochrane said. "Sometimes it's people back there that will surprise you."

Cochrane said the course features many turns and a few small hills. There is one long hill just before the two-mile that turns into a smaller pop-up hill. Cochrane said the runners have to be in a good position before the hill, because that is where runners can open up gaps.

The men's cross country team is in a different position than the women. They enter the MIAA Championships coming off a fifth-place finish at the GLVC/MIAA Challenge — a place head coach Tim Schwegler said he would be happy with before the race.

Just like the GLVC/MIAA, the Bulldogs are not favored to finish in the top four. The University of Central Missouri, Southern, Pitt State and Southwest Baptist University are all nationally ranked.

Schwegler said the team can build off its finish from two weeks ago, which presented a harder task than this weekend.

"I think it gave them a lot of confidence they can run with people in the conference," Schwegler said. "I feel like they can get up where they need to be. We need to get five guys in the top 30, three guys in the top 20."

Sophomore Joey Walls has finished first for the men in three races this season. Walls and juniors Bob Gorman and sophomore Adam Kell have been the top three runners the 'Dogs in every race.

Schwegler said the strategy for the men is to run a slightly faster first mile than usual, because of a downhill course, then move up in the latter part of the race.

"It's how we move up," Schwegler said. "I'm more concerned about the last half of the race than I am the first half."

Rugby drops match against KSU 29-12

BY JACK NICHOLL
Sports Editor

A few minutes can make all the difference.

The Bulls rugby team clung to a five-point lead for most of the first half against Kansas State University last Saturday, but just before halftime, the momentum shifted.

KSU scored two tries, including one in injury time, before the end of the half en route to a 29-12 victory. The loss drops the Bulls' record to 1-2 with one more match remaining in the fall season.

"We played about 25 minutes of really nice, quality rugby, and then they had a couple breakaways, and the one that really hurt was right before half," head coach Bill Sexton said. "And you could just sense this degree of frustration at halftime in the players."

There was a similar pat-

tern in the second half. The Bulls kept the score close for about 20 minutes, but KSU pulled ahead at the end with two scores, including another in injury time.

Freshman David McDonough said the turning point in the second half was with about 20 minutes to play, when "everything just fell apart" for the team. He said the Bulls started making turnovers and the level of fitness caught up to them.

"Our forwards are bigger than them, so we thought we could control the pack a little bit better than we did," McDonough said. "And in the back, we just didn't perform like what we

wanted to." During the second half, the Bulls had chances to score near the goal, but Sexton said Kansas State often regained possession and punted the ball downfield.

Vice-captain Jason Ralph

said Kansas State's two scores at the end of the first half represented a "huge momentum change" and that KSU entered the second half with a lot more confidence.

"K-State has a lot of weapons, and whenever they get motivated, get excited, their rate of play just jumped dramatically, and we were not able to stay up with them," Ralph said.

Sexton said the team struggled to finish movements throughout the match, and they did not respond well to Kansas State's pressure and defense. The final score was a stark difference from the matchup last spring, when the Bulls won 36-0 at home.

"Coming into the game, the key was defense and your willingness to play defense hard and shut them down," Sexton said. "It turns out [their coach] told them the same thing. They were more effective at shutting us down than we were at shutting them down."

Sexton said KSU also took advantage of some missed tackles by the Bulls on multi-



Head coach Bill Sexton said tackling was one of the things Bulls rugby could have done better last weekend in their 29-12 loss against Kansas State University.

ple breakaways, and the team did not play as aggressively as they should have in break-downs and scrums.

"They were gutted by this," Sexton said. "This was a game that perhaps they were a little too confident in, but in reality, K-State stepped up to the plate and played very hard, and you have to give them a lot of credit."

The Bulls' struggles started long before the end of the first half. Ralph said the team did not have good

practices the last couple days of the previous week, because many players went home for Midterm Break. This caused many players to meet the rest of the team at Kansas State.

The Bulls also were affected by two in-game injuries. Senior Phil Powell left with a high ankle sprain and senior Paul Edgerley left with a rolled ankle. However, even with the setbacks, the team did not have much of a dropoff.

"The reserves that came in just played excellent," McDonough said. "They showed that they can play whenever we need them. That was one of the few good things that came out of the game."

Next up for the Bulls is a match Saturday at St. Louis University, which the Bulls last played in fall 2007 with an 11-8 win. The team returns home Oct. 31 against University of Nebraska-Lincoln, which is the final match of the fall season.

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