

FRIENDS INVITATIONAL

At Lake Afton

Fri., Sept. 11, 2009

The 2009 Friends Invitational was the biggest and best in the years we have been attending, with 17 schools competing and 128 women and 117 men finishers in the 5K and 8K races. Heavy rain earlier in the week left the course soft and muddy in places and slowed times, but 70 degree temperatures and light winds were great for early season racing.

Our men's team competed very well in our 2nd meet of the season, running our fastest team time ever at the Lake Afton course, to win a close, competitive meet over Fort Hays State U by a 3 point margin, 45-48. Andrew Topham (JR) has been our #1 runner in all but 1 meet in his 2 plus seasons, and he led our team again with another outstanding race, finishing 2nd by less than a second in 25:52. Freshman Frank Adelman continues to be impressive in early workouts and races, and he had another excellent race to finish 7th in 26:34, his 2nd top 10 finish in as many meets. Carrington Crum (Soph) took a big step toward becoming the national class runner his is capable of, placing 8th in 26:58. Zack Conroy (SR) had his career best time on the Lake Afton course (27:20/12th), and senior Jimmy Bryant came through with his 16th place finish in 27:41, an improvement of 2:01 over his 2007 time. Freshman Clint Kessler competed very well again and was our #6 (28:25/32nd), and although not at full speed due to an injury, sophomore Conner Drendel had an excellent effort to finish 36th in 28:40. Senior Tanner McNinch improved his per mile average from last week at the WSU Gold Classic, and he is coming back well from several injuries and health problems. It's always good to win a meet, and our guys are beginning to figure out how good they have a chance to be.

Our women's team is making steady progress and competed very well for the 2nd straight week to finish 4th in the field of 15 full teams. Despite the fact that 4 of our top 7 from last year graduated and 2 others were not available again due to injury/health issues, our ladies ran the fastest team time in all meets we have attended at the Lake Afton course by over 3 minutes. Amy Pierson led our team with another outstanding race, winning her first collegiate cross country meet with an excellent early season 18:36, a 41 second personal best for 5000M cross country. Sydnee Nelson (FR) has been steady, consistent, and reliable from the first day of practice, and she competed very well again to be our #2 runner for the 2nd straight meet, finishing 17th in the 128 runner field in 20:12. Jennifer Hendrixson (SO), Arely Smith (SR), and Larrissa Vasquez (JR) all stepped it up and ran faster per mile averages in this 5K than in last week's 4K, and Erica Dunigan (SO), Mychala Money (JR), and Kash Shuck (SO) showed us again that they are going to be important factors in our success. We need to close the gaps between our runners, and that is going to happen as we gain experience and fitness.