

KCAC CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sat., Nov. 7, 2009

Lake Afton

The 2009 KCAC Cross Country Championship Meet was held last Saturday, Nov. 7, at Lake Afton southwest of Goddard. The Lake Afton course is true cross country, mostly grass with some trails and varying from flat to rolling to a few short, steep hills. It was warm for a November morning but another beautiful day for a race.

Our women were ranked 3rd in the KCAC going into the meet, and we competed very well to finish where we were ranked. We dealt with some health issues all season that kept us from being as good as we had the potential to be, but our ladies ran hard and well and did a great job of carrying on our long standing tradition of quality and excellence. This team was as good as a lot of our KCAC championship teams, and with only 1 senior in our top 7 in this meet, the future looks promising. Amy Pierson became our program's 17th individual women's KCAC champion with an outstanding, smooth, controlled race. She led the majority of the race and won by 18 seconds over 2nd place, and her 18:26 was her career 2nd fastest time. Sydnee Nelson (20:05/19th) and Jennifer Hendrixson (20:13/20th) had top 20 finishes, with Jennifer running a career best time and Sydnee her 2nd fastest. Alyssa Carter ran a season best 20:20 to place 22nd, and Larrissa Vasquez ran a personal best 20:55 in 25th. Jordan Unruh ran her 1st race of the season (due to health issues), and competed well to place 27th in the 60 runner field with a 21:01. Mychala Money and Erica Dunigan finished close together in 31st and 32nd and both had big improvements from the Friends Inv. earlier in the season on this course. Arely Smith competed hard but was still not at full strength after having the flu.

Heading into this season our men had not lost to a KCAC school in any meet in 29 years, and Kansas Wesleyan beat us twice out of 3 times we raced them earlier this season to break that streak. Being the underdog going into the KCAC meet was a different kind of challenge for our guys, and they responded with by far our best performance of the season and one of our best in several years. We got healthy and recovered from the flu that several were suffering from at our home meet 2 weeks earlier, our workouts had been outstanding for the last month, and our guys stepped it up in a big way. We led the race from start to finish and our top 6 finishers all ran personal best times to give us a 30-41 win over an excellent Kansas Wesleyan team. Andrew Topham ran another outstanding race, a personal best 25:07 to win his 2nd consecutive KCAC individual title, and he's better than he's ever been at this point in the season. Frank Adelman ran an incredible race for a freshman, running in 1st or 2nd until Andrew passed him in the 4th mile, and then finishing strong to run a personal best 25:25, 22 seconds ahead of 3rd place. Carrington Crum (26:01/5th), Conner Drendel (26:19/10th), Jimmy Bryant (26:24/12th), and Clint Kessler (27:03/15th) all ran personal best times and excellent races, and Zack Conroy (27:34/19th) ran tough despite not being back to full strength after having the flu. Tanner McNinch continued to make progress with a year best 30:42 in 48th place. The top 15 finishers in each race earn All-KCAC honors, and we were pleased to have Amy Pierson and 6 of our guys in that group.

Our men won our 30th consecutive KCAC title with this championship, and it was fitting that around 30 or our cross country alums were at the meet to support our teams. We truly appreciate the support of our runner's families, our alums, and our fans, and for helping make last Saturday another great day to be a Builder.

Our men's team and Amy Pierson will be traveling to Vancouver, WA next week to compete in the NAIA National Championships. We're looking forward to an exciting trip and to finishing off this season with our best performance yet.