

WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY GOLD CLASSIC

Raft Golf Course Augusta, KS

Sat., Sept. 5, 2009

The 2009 cross country season is under way, and once again our teams are excited and looking forward to continuing the long tradition of excellence here at Southwestern. Our men's team won its 29th consecutive KCAC conference championship last fall, and then capped off another outstanding season with a 21st place finish at the NAIA National Championships in Kenosha, WI. Our 2008 women's team was arguably the best in the history of our program, winning our 4th straight KCAC title (12th in the last 15 years), and going on to finish 16th in the national meet despite being ranked 31st in the nation going in. This year's men's team returns 5 of our top 7 from last year, and is the best group we have had in terms of quality and experience in several years. We graduated 4 of our top 7 women from last year's team, and we know it will take time to get things rolling like we want. But both team's returning runners are improved over last year at this time and our new additions are making a big contribution.

We opened the 2009 season the some excellent performances at the Wichita State U Gold Classic on Saturday, Sept. 5. The relatively small, low key meet with shorter than traditional race distances gave us the opportunity to see where we are individually and as a team. Our primary focus was on establishing a good starting point, finding out who is willing to compete on race day, and getting back into the racing mentality and routine. Both teams competed well and finished 3rd behind Kansas State U and Wichita State U in the 6 team field.

Junior Amy Pierson had an excellent opening effort, finishing 6th in the 52 runner field with a time of 14:30 for 4,000M, an improvement of 2:03 over last year in this meet. Amy earned NAIA Indoor T&F All-America honors last spring by placing 5th in the 800M run, and she split 2:11.87 in the 4X800M Relay at the NAIA National Outdoor Championships. She is ready for a great cross country season, and she was beaten by only 2 KSU and 3 WSU runners in this race. Freshman Sydnee Nelson has made a big contribution from day 1, and she was our 2nd finisher in 19th place (16:00). Jennifer Hendrixson (SO), Arely Smith(SR), Erica Dunigan(SO), and Larrissa Vasquez(JR) ran well and finished close together in 22nd, 23rd, 24th, and 26th. New additions Mychala Money(JR) and Kash Shuck(SO) showed they will be important contributors for us with good opening efforts. Alyssa Carter(SR) and Jordan Unruh(JR), both top 7 returners from last year, did not compete due to health issues.

Returning All-American Andrew Topham opened his junior season in a big way, finishing 4th with a 6,000M time of 19:05, averaging 5:07 per mile, and like always he got stronger as the race progressed. Andrew finished 27th in last year's NAIA National Championships, and placed 8th in the 2009 NAIA National Outdoor 10,000M run with a time of 31:12, ranking him 2nd in that event on the SC all-time list. Andrew finished Saturday's race behind 2 runners from WSU and 1 from KSU, and he's ready for another great season. Freshman Frank Adelman has been outstanding in early workouts, and that carried over to Saturday's race with his 7th place finish in 19:28. Frank was one of the top 6A runners in Oklahoma last year (Yukon HS), and he will be another in a long line of national class runners for us. Carrington Crum(SO), Zack Conroy(SR), Clint Kessler(FR), Conner Drendel(SO), and Jimmy Bryant(SR) ran close together throughout the race and competed very well to finish 19th, 21st, 23rd, 25th, and 26th. The returners in that group have national cross country and track meet experience, and Clint is another quality freshman, placing 11th in the 2008 Kansas 5A State Meet. Tanner McNinch(SR) had a 44 second improvement over last year to round out our team.

As always at this point, we're lacking racing fitness and dealing with fatigue of hard training, but the results of early workouts and our first meet are very encouraging, and we're looking forward to the meets coming up.