HCAC Cross Country Championships Set for Bluffton Nature Preserve

GREENWOOD, IN – The HCAC men’s and women’s cross country championships will take place Saturday, October 27 at the Bluffton University Nature Preserve Cross Country Course in Bluffton, Ohio. The first race, which begins at 11 AM, will mark the first time since 2005 the conference meet was held at Bluffton.

Manchester will look to claim the school’s fourth straight men’s and women’s conference championship at the event. Rose-Hulman and Franklin try to challenge the Spartans on the men’s side this weekend, while Hanover and Franklin look to contend in the women’s race.

The Spartans have been led by three different individuals this season. Chris LaFree (South Bend, Ind.) set the course record and finished first at the Bluffton Invitational on September 8 with a time of 26:41. Curtis Nordmann (Bourbon, Ind.) claimed a ninth place finish at the Indiana Intercollegiate with an 8K time of 26:00. Jon Caffarelli (Lansing, Ill.) led the black and gold twice this season, highlighted by a first place finish at the Manchester Invitational (25:54.1).

Manchester has fared well against conference competition this season. MU has been the highest placing HCAC school at each meet they have competed in, including a fourth place finish at the Indiana Intercollegiate. The black and gold currently stand ninth in the Great Lakes Region in a poll released by USTFCCCA.

Rose-Hulman will strive to claim the top spot as conference champs this weekend. The Engineers have been paced by Stuart West (LaPorte, Ind.) this season. The sophomore has led Rose twice this season, posting a season-best time at the Wilmington Invitational with a time of 26:03.77. West also earned a third place finish at the Earlham Invitational (27:42), guiding the Engineers to the team title.

Franklin’s Kris Sandlin (Scottsburg, Ind.) has been running well this season for the Grizzlies as the blue and gold look to claim their first title since 2008. The junior finished first overall at the Greater Louisville Classic with a time of 25:57.28 and followed that performance with a 13th place finish at the NCAA Pre-National meet in Terre Haute (25:55). Sandlin was a three-time HCAC Runner of the Week this fall.

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The Manchester women have been impressive this fall and enter Saturday’s championship as the favorite to repeat. The Spartans fared well against conference competition this season, leading the conference field at the Indiana Intercollegiate and NCAA Pre-National meets. The black and gold earned team titles at the Manchester Hokum Kareem and Bluffton Invitational while finishing second at the Manchester Invitational.

Manchester has been paced by senior Karla Madrigal (Elkhart, Ind.). Madrigal was the top Manchester finisher at every meet this fall, highlighted by a first place finish with a course record time at the Bluffton Invitational (23:53).

Franklin’s Hillary Cain (Rushville, Ind.) has been dominant this fall, earning the conference’s Runner of the Week award five times. The defending HCAC champion, earned individual titles at the Franklin Invitational and the Indiana Intercollegiate meet this fall. She also posted a second place finish at the Greater Louisville Classic, a fourth place finish at Wilmington (18:13, career best time), and a 12th place finish at the NCAA Pre-National meet.

Hanover’s Mackenzie Dye (New Castle, Ind.) has paced the Panthers in every race she has competed in this season. The sophomore placed third at the Hanover Invitational with a 5K time of 19:58 and finished eighth overall at the Franklin Invitational (19:36).

The top 12 finishers on the men’s and women’s side will be named All-HCAC, while the top freshman finisher will be named Freshman of the Year. Individuals who finish 13th through 20th at the conference meet will be named All-HCAC honorable mention.

The women will compete on a 6K course Saturday while the men will run the 8K course. Action will get underway from Bluffton University with the men’s race at 11 AM followed by the women’s race at 12PM.

Awards will be presented at the finish line at about 1:30 PM. Spectator parking will be available near the Bluffton baseball and softball facilities.

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