

USTFCCA National (Pre-Season): Men - 7. Western Washington, 15. Alaska Anchorage, 22. Western Oregon. **Women** - 3. Seattle Pacific, 9. Alaska Anchorage, 10. Western Washington. **Regional (Pre-Season): Men** - 1. Chico State; 2. Western Washington; 3. Alaska Anchorage; 4. Western Oregon; 5. Cal Poly Pomona; 6. Hawaii Pacific; 7. UC San Diego; 8. Humboldt State; 9. Saint Martin's; 10. Cal State Stanislaus. **Women (Pre-Season)** - 1. Seattle Pacific; 2. Chico State; 3. Alaska Anchorage; 4. Western Washington; 5. Cal State L.A.; 6. UC San Diego; 7. BYU-Hawaii; 8. Western Oregon; 9. Northwest Nazarene; 10. Humboldt State.

For Most Teams Cross Country Season Begins This Week

Central Washington and Alaska Fairbanks got a jump start with a pair of duals last week, but for most Great Northwest Athletic cross country teams, the 2009 season gets underway this week.

Defending GNAC men's champion Alaska Anchorage opens at home Saturday hosting its annual invitational, while defending women's champion Seattle Pacific debuts Saturday in Bellingham competing against Western Washington in the Lake Padden Relays.

Both UAA and SPU are nationally ranked in the USTFCC pre-season poll. After finishing second in the region and fourth in the national meet a year ago, Seattle Pacific is ranked third nationally while Alaska Anchorage, which finished second in the region and 11th nationally, is ranked 15th.

Western Washington, which placed 10th at nationals last November, drew the top men's pre-season nationally ranking coming in at No.7. Western Oregon earned a No. 22 ranking in the men's national poll. In addition to SPU, Alaska Anchorage (9th) and Western Washington (10th) earned Top 10 national rankings in the pre-season poll.

In the pre-season regional rankings the SPU women are ranked first, while UAA and WWU are ranked third and fourth. In the men's regional rankings Western Washington, Alaska Anchorage and Western Oregon are ranked second, third and fourth in back of seven-time defending champion Chico State.

Western Oregon opens its season Thursday with a GNAC-best 14 returning runners - eight men and six women - from the squads that finished third and fourth in last year's conference meet. Western Washington also returns 14 runners - six men and eight women - from the squads that finished second (men) and third (women) in the conference meet.

Seattle Pacific returns 12 (6 men, 6 women) and both Alaska Anchorage (3 men, 8 women) and Saint Martin's (6 men, 5 women) have 11 returners.

UAA's men return two all-conference performers - Marko Cheseto (Jr., Kapenguria, Kenya) and Alfred Kangogo (So., Eldoret, Kenya) - off last year's championship team which scored a GNAC record-low 34 points. Cheseto placed first in the conference meet and second at regionals before earning All-America honors with a ninth place finish at the national meet, while Kangogo was third in the GNAC meet.

UAA will be seeking its third GNAC title in the past five years when the 2009 championship meet is held Oct. 24 in Yakima. Central Washington is the host school.

WWU, which finished second last season with 53 points, returns three athletes who earned all-conference honors with Top 10 finishes - Jordan Welling (Jr., Burlington, WA), Bennett Grimes (Jr., Pocatello, ID - Century) and Blake Medhaug (Jr., Bothell, WA). Welling placed fifth, Grimes finished ninth and Medhaug was 10th in the 2008 conference meet.

All three athletes went on to earn All-American honors placing 29th, 36th and 41st at the national meet.

On the women's side, Seattle Pacific will be seeking its fifth consecutive league title and its sixth overall. The Falcons return three all-conference performers including three-time conference and regional champion and two-time defending national champion Jessica Pixler (Sr., Sammamish, WA- Eastlake).

In addition to Pixler, the Falcons also return Jane Larson (Sr., Fall City, WA - Cedar Park Christian) and Natty Plunket (So., Bellevue, WA - Newport), who finished third and seventh to earn all-conference honors. Larson earned All-American honors at the national meet with a 15th place finish.

In addition to the three SPU athletes, five other all-conference runners return, including Sarah Porter (Jr., Hockinson, WA - Hockinson) of Western Washington, Laura Carr (Sr., South Bend, IN - Penn) of Alaska Anchorage, Hallidie Wilt (So., Unalaska, AK - Unalaska) of Alaska Anchorage, Jaclyn Puga (Jr., Meridian, ID - Nampa Christian) of Northwest Nazarene and Ruth Jeptoo (So., Kapcheno, Kenya - Eisero) of Alaska Anchorage.

They finished second, fourth, eighth, ninth and 10th, respectively, a year ago. Porter was also an All-American placing 13th in the national meet.

In addition to the meets at Monmouth, Bellingham and Anchorage, GNAC teams will compete at three other venues this week.

Montana State Billings will face Rocky Mountain in a dual in Billings and Alaska Fairbanks heads to Hawaii for the Hawaii Pacific Invitational. Saint Martin's also hosts a meet in Lacey. Northwest Nazarene won't make its debut until Sept. 12 when it competes at the Roger Curran Invitational in Nampa.

2009 GNAC Cross Country Schedule

September 3- WOU Summer's End Invitational (WOU). 5- MSUB/Rocky Mountain-Dual Meet (MSUB); Hawaii Pacific University (UAF); UAA Invitational (UAA); SMU Invitational (SMU); Lake Padden Relays (SPU, WWU). 12- NNU Roger Curran Invitational (NNU); CWU Apple Ridge Preview (UAF, CWU, SPU, WWU); Lewis & Clark Invitational (WOU); South Dakota Tech Invitational (MSUB). 19- Willamette Grass Course (WOU); Montana State Invitational (MSUB); UofW Sundodger Invitational (UAA, CWU, NNU, SMU, SPU, WWU). 25- Dickinson State Invitational (MSUB). 26- NNU Bob Firman Invitational (CWU, NNU); TESC Pete Steiberg Invitational (SMU, SPU); Western Oregon Open (WOU).

October 3- Willamette Charles Bowles Invitational (NNU, SPU); Emerald City Open (SPU); Rocky Mountain Shootout-University of Colorado (MSUB). 9- San Francisco West Region Preview (UAA, SPU, WOU). 10- Western Washington Invitational (CWU, SMU, SPU, WWU); Yellowjacket Invitational (MSUB). 17- Eastern Oregon Invitational (NNU); Spokane CC Runner's Soul Bigfoot Open (CWU). 24- GNAC Championships (at Apple Ridge, Yakima).

November 7 - NCAA West Regional (at San Francisco). 21- NCAA National Championships (at Evansville, Ind.).

TEAM CAPSULES

ALASKA ANCHORAGE Seawolves

Head Coach: Michael Friess, Linfield '85 (20th year)
Assistants: T.J. Garlatz, David Kiplagat
2008 Conference Finish: Men – 1st, 34. Women – 2nd, 52.
2008 Regional Finish: Men – 2nd, 67 Women – 3rd, 104
2008 National Finish: Men – 11th, 288. Women – 9th, 266.
Returning Conference Finishers: Men (3) – Marko Cheseto (Jr., 1st, 24:30.27); Alfred Kangogo (So., 3rd, 25:09.92); Paul Rottich (Jr., 32nd, 27:14.13). **Women (8)** – Laura Carr (Sr., 4th, 22:10.86); Hallidie Wilt (Jr., 8th, 22:56.24); Ruth Jeptoo (So., 10th, 23:03.21) Emma Bohman (Jr., 25th, 23:52.54); Shoshana Keegan (So., 33rd, 24:21.67); Ariel Rolle (So., 43rd, 24:40.99); Mychaela Bailey (So., 44th, 24:41.06); Samantha Rink (So., 64th, 26:16.57).

ALASKA FAIRBANKS Nanooks

Head Coach: Scott Jerome, Bates '93 (6th year)
Assistant: Matt Dunlap
2008 Conference Finish: Men – 7th, 183. Women – 6th, 158.
2008 Regional Finish: Men – 15th, 418. Women – Did not compete.
Returning Conference Finishers: Men (4) – Mitch Chandler (Jr., 31st, 27:12.60); Einar Often (Sr., 42nd, 27:58.78); Ray Sabo (Sr., 51st, 28:23.80); Erik Soderstrom (Jr., 70th, 31:42.77). **Women (4)** – Theresia Schnurr (Jr., 13th, 23:16.27); Jana Benedix (Jr., 53rd, 25:03.11); Aurelia Korthauer (Sr., 55th, 25:04.43); Amber Drumm (Sr., 66th, 26:19.69).

CENTRAL WASHINGTON Wildcats

Head Coach: Kevin Adkisson, Willamette '91 (16th year)
Assistants: Brian Contreras
2008 Conference Finish: Men – 8th, 213. Women – 8th, 218.
2008 Regional Finish: Men – None. Women – 16th, 422.
Returning Conference Finishers: Men (2) – Wes Hargrove (Jr., 40th, 27:51.45); Scott Power (Jr., 58th, 29:11.55). **Women (7)** – Adriana Mendoza (Sr., 50th, 24:54.44); Kelsey Kreft (So., 62nd, 25:47.79); Mary Bakeman (Sr., 68th, 26:56.98); Shannon Vreeland (Sr., 71st, 27:16.25); Elizabeth Mann (So., 72nd, 27:20.52); Amanda Valera (So., 73rd, 27:42.04); Jessica Hirschhorn (Sr., 76th, 28:23.50).

MONTANA STATE BILLINGS Yellowjackets

Head Coach: Dave Coppock, Montana '79 (21st year)
Assistants: Cassie Holm
2008 Conference Finish: Men – 9th, 276. Women – 9th, 253.
2008 Regional Finish: Men – None. Women – 20th, 577.
Returning Conference Finishers: Men (3) – Travis Hutchinson (So. 61st, 29:20.79); Taylor Canfield (So. 65th, 29:48.54); Kelley Miller (Jr., 66th, 30:31.51). **Women (4)** – Sarah Jackson (Jr., 48th, 24:49.15); Mykel Ler (Jr., 65th, 26:17.96); Katie Thiel (Jr., 70th, 27:10.77); Malori Woodford (Jr., 77th, 28:36.93).

NORTHWEST NAZARENE Crusaders

Head Coach: John Spatz, Eastern Washington '88 (8th year)
Assistants: Ben Gall, Jake Perry
2008 Conference Finish: Men – 6th, 184. Women – 5th, 123.
2008 Regional Finish: Men – None. Women – 9th, 237.
Returning Conference Finishers: Men (6) – Neil Easter (So., 26th, 26:52.11); Luke Hetrick (So., 39th, 27:45.98); Alex Crystal (So., 54th, 28:37.07); Hank Hetrick (Sr., 55th, 28:44.49); Josh Merioles (So., 56th, 28:46.76); Caleb Reynolds (Jr., 64th, 29:42.25). **Women (3)** – Jaelyn Puga (Jr., 9th, 22:56.86); Ashley Rendahl (Jr., 35th, 24:30.53); Danielle Beesley (So., 58th, 25:40.58).

SAINT MARTIN'S Saints

Head Coach: Julie Sullivan, Seattle Pacific '01 (4th year)
Assistants: Josiah Price, Patrick Talmadge, Larry Weber.
2008 Conference Finish: Men – 4th, 98. Women – 7th, 179.
2008 Regional Finish: Men – 9th, 207. Women – 14th, 370.
Returning Conference Finishers: Men (6) – Kyle Van Santen (So., 14th, 26:02.68); Spencer Hunt (So., 29th, 27:09.66); Nick Harvey (Jr., 41st, 27:53.44); Noah Caffrey (So., 49th, 28:17.31); Jacob Suazo (So., 72nd, 32:33.14).
Women (5) – Joscelyn Minton (So., 14th, 23:16.59); Annie Lawreyson (Jr., 32nd, 24:19.99); Krinda Carlson (Sr., 41st, 24:38.64); Helen Camden (Jr., 49th, 24:49.38); Kaitlynn Pecha (So., 63rd, 25:56.68).

SEATTLE PACIFIC Falcons

Head Coach: Erika Daligcon, SPU '97 (2nd year)
Assistant: Doris Heritage
2008 Conference Finish: Men – 5th, 119. Women – 1st, 48.
2008 Regional Finish: Men – None. Women – 2nd, 92.
2008 National Finish: Men – None. Women – 4th, 194.
Returning Conference Finishers: Men (6) - Chad Meis (Sr., 15th, 26:06.15); Daniel Friesen (So., 23rd, 26:45.70); Andrew Hamilton (So., 43rd, 27:58.79); Jordan Lance (So., 44th, 28:00.46); Nathaniel Sleight (50th, 28:20.70); Daniel Hamilton (So., 52nd, 28:31.36). **Women (6)** – Jessica Pixler (Sr., 1st, 21:12.00); Jane Larson (Sr., 3rd, 22:06.10); Natty Plunkett (So., 7th, 22:44.11); Kate Harline (Sr., 16th, 23:21.20); Lisa Anderberg (Sr., 21st, 23:39.95); Mary Williams (So., 23rd, 23:49.77).

WESTERN OREGON Wolves

Head Coach: Mike Johnson, Eastern Washington '72 (6th year)
Assistants: Jerret Mantalas, Isaac Frederick, Jessica Harper, Lyndsey McKillip
2008 Conference Finish: Men – 3rd, 78. Women – 4th, 111.
2008 Regional Finish: Men – 4th, 128. Women – 8th, 217.
Returning Conference Finishers: Men (8) - Chris Reed (Jr., 12th, 25:56.55); Mike Schmidt (Sr., 18th, 26:22.85); Braxton Jackson (Sr., 21st, 26:29.67); Brandon Snook (Sr., 24th, 26:46.64); Justin Karr (Jr., 27th, 27:05.51); Jeff Long (Sr., 30th, 27:11.36); Kyle Larson (Jr., 36th, 27:32.72). Derek Lopez (Jr., 53rd, 28:32.48). **Women (6)** – Amanda Wright (So., 18th, 23:35.69); Tricia Morrison (Jr., 19th, 23:37.44); Annan Applebee (Jr., 36th, 24:31.37); KayAnna Cecchi (So., 40th, 24:37.24); Erica Zambon (Sr., 57th, 25:30.52).

WESTERN WASHINGTON Vikings

Head Coach: Kelven "Pee Wee" Halsell, Wayland Baptist '81 (23rd year)
Assistants: Bill Roe, Christina Ashby, Al Reimer, Erik Bies, Keever Henry
2008 Conference Finish: Men – 2nd, 53. Women – 3rd, 75.
2008 Regional Finish: Men - 3rd, 103. Women – 5th, 141.
2008 National Finish: Men – 10th, 263. Women – 10th, 301.
Returning Conference Finishers: Men (6) – Jordan Welling (Jr., 5th, 25:15.76); Bennett Grimes (Jr., 9th, 25:36.65); Blake Medhaug (So., 10th, 25:45.48); Yonas Berhe (So., 13th, 26:02.03); Eric Brill (So., 17th, 26:18.53); Sam Bedell (Sr., 19th, 26:23.10); Greg Kubitz (45th, 28:04.92). **Women (8)** – Sarah Porter (Jr., 2nd, 21:51.16); Laura Breihof (So., 12th, 23:13.47); Courtney Olsen (Sr., 17th, 23:33.39); Danielle Slaughter (Sr., 29th, 24:05.21); Phoebe Hartnett (So., 31st, 24:18.07); McKinley Williams (Jr., 42nd, 24:40.84); Sierra Brisky (So., 47th, 24:48.47); Kendra Hedges (So., 56th, 25:27.84).