



Spokane To Host 2011 & 2013 NCAA Division II Cross Country Nationals

The 2011 and 2013 NCAA Division II Cross Country National Championships will be held in Spokane, Wash., the NCAA Division II Championship Committee announced earlier this week.

The championships will be co-hosted by the Great Northwest Athletic Conference and the Spokane Regional Sports Commission in partnership with the Plantes Ferry Athletic Complex and the Mirabeau Park Hotel.

The 2011 championships will be held Saturday, Nov. 19 at the Plantes Ferry Sports Complex. The 2013 championships will be Saturday, Nov. 23 at the same site.

“We are always excited and honored anytime we have the opportunity to host an NCAA Championship in our community,” Eric Sawyer, President and CEO of the Spokane Regional Sports Commission said.

“But, in this community, a community that really values and appreciates cross country running, excited and honored would be understatement,” Sawyer added.

“Over the past few years, the GNAC has established itself as one of the top two or three Division II cross country running conferences in the country so we are very pleased the NCAA has awarded us the national championships,” GNAC Commissioner Richard Hannan said.

“We are excited about working with Eric Sawyer, Chris Frye (Vice President of Sports Marketing and Research for the Sports Commission) and the Spokane Sports Commission in bringing two more NCAA national championships to Spokane,” Hannan said.

The Spokane Regional Sports Commission has a strong track record in hosting cross country national championships as well as various other national events.

It hosted the 2010 USA Cross Country Nationals last spring and is slated to host the 2010 and 2011 USATF 15 kilometer Trail Running National Championships. It also hosted the 2008 USA Club Cross Country Nationals, the 2008 USATF Masters Track and Field Championships and the 2006 USATF Junior Olympic Cross Country National Championships.

The Great Northwest Athletic Conference begins its 10th season of competition this fall under Hannan, who previously served as athletic director at Lewis-Clark State College, Weber State and Southwest Texas State before being named the conference’s first commissioner in July, 2001.

The GNAC conference office is located in Spokane. The conference is comprised of 10 universities including Central Washington University, Western Washington University, Seattle Pacific University, Saint Martin’s University, Montana State University Billings, Northwest Nazarene University, Western Oregon University, the University of Alaska Anchorage, the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Simon Fraser University (BC).

Last fall, five GNAC teams qualified for the NCAA Division II cross country national championships. In the women’s division, Seattle Pacific (4th), Alaska Anchorage (5th) and Western Washington (8th) all placed in the Top 10 and the top two individual finishers – Jessica Pixler of Seattle Pacific (1st) and Sarah Porter of Western Washington (2nd) – were GNAC athletes.

Western Washington and Alaska Anchorage, meanwhile, earned fourth and 17th place finishes in the men’s division.