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## CROSS COUNTRY

### **Western men fourth, women eighth at NCAA II National Championships**

#### **Porter places second individually, Vikings' best-ever national finish**

EVANSVILLE, Ind. --- Western Washington University enjoyed the finest cross country day in school history as the men's team placed fourth and the women's squad eighth with Sarah Porter (Jr., Hockinson) second individually at the NCAA Division II National Championships held Saturday on the campus course of host University of Southern Indiana.

"I knew they could do it and then for it to happen was truly amazing," said Pee Wee Halsell, who is completing his 23rd season as Western's coach.

The respective finishes were the Vikings' best since becoming an NCAA member in 1998. Both teams were 10th last year. In 1992, the Western women placed fourth and the men sixth at the NAIA National Championships.

"The competition here was much deeper and the course much tougher," said Halsell. "This is definitely the best men's team we've had and the women's squad would compare very favorably with that 1992 team."

Porter's second-place finish was the best by any cross country runner in school history. She ran the 6-kilometer course in 20:30.1, less than seven seconds behind Seattle Pacific's Jessica Pixler, who won her third national title with a clocking of 20:22.6.

"Sarah's strategy was not to go out with the leaders and expend too much energy," Halsell said. "At the halfway mark, she went out and really started dropping people and she was really pulling on Pixler at the end."

Porter finished over 13 seconds ahead of third-place Ashley Siler from Missouri Southern.

Adams State NM, the team champion in both the men's and women's competition, finished with 23 points in the men's division. Western State CO was second (86), Colorado Mines third (153) and the Vikings fourth (170), 15 points ahead of fifth-place Grand Valley State MI.

Western was paced by Jordan Welling (Jr., Burlington/Burlington-Edison), who finished 13th, completing the 10-kilometer course in 31:44.6.

"Jordan got up that first hill and then at the halfway mark started picking people off," Halsell said. "He had a very strong second half."

The Vikings' Anthony Tomsich (Sr., Fairbanks, AK/West Valley) placed 45th (32:44.7), Eric Brill (So., Kent/Kentwood) 52nd (32:48.6), Bennett Grimes (Jr., Pocatello, ID/Century) 56th (32:53.7), Blake Medhaug (Jr., Bothell) 61st (32:59.9), Greg Kubitz (Sr., Kelso) 79th (33:18.0) and Yonas Berhe (So., Seattle/Roosevelt) 97th (33:41.5).

"To have all seven men finish in the top 100 is an amazing feat," Halsell said. "Brill had an incredible race, to move up from being our fifth runner most of the season to third was outstanding."

The Western women finished with 300 points. Adams State's winning total was 73. Three other West Region teams placed in the top 10, Seattle Pacific being fourth (151), Alaska Anchorage fifth (158) and Chico State sixth (172).

The Vikings were six points ahead of ninth-place Western State.

Porter's runner-up finish was three places better than the previous Western best of fifth by Jane Abbott at the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women national meet in 1980. The next highest placing was seventh by Paul Kezes in the men's 2002 NCAA II meet.

The Vikings' Lauren Breihof (So., Vancouver/Mountain View) was 31st in 21:48.7 and Courtney Olsen (Sr., Bellingham/Squalicum) was 65th in 22:30.2.

Western's Kirsten Moore (Fr., Carlsbad, CA) was 112th (23:13.1), Sierra Brisky (So., Acme/Mount Baker) 153rd (24:02.0), Danielle Slaughter (Sr., Spokane/Shadle Park) 166th (24:31.7) and Emily Wallen (Fr., Olympia/Capital) 181st (26:09.4).

Porter, Breihof and Welling earned U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association All-America honors by placing among the top 40. It is the second award for both Porter and Welling. Porter finished 13th last year, and Welling was 29th.

Western entered the meet with the men ranked sixth nationally and women 11th in the latest USTFCCCA/NCAA II Top 25.