

10-29-1980

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Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "10/29/1980 - Cross Country Team Streak" (1980). 1980. 105.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_1980/105

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Panther Sports News

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Nov. 11, 1980

LS-AS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University's cross country team hopes to keep a streak alive this weekend in the NCAA II National Cross Country Championship.

The Panthers will run finals at Kenosha, WI on the same course in which they have won two previous multi-team meets this fall, the USTFF Open and Great Lakes Regional.

The competition will be stiffer this Saturday morning as nearly 180 runners representing over 20 teams will depart on the 10,000 meter course at 11 a.m.

Entering this meet Eastern is ranked fourth in the nation with Cal Poly/SLO at the top followed by Southwest Missouri State and Humboldt (CA) State.

Coach Tom Woodall says, "I don't know what to expect. We haven't put it together yet this year . . . we could run our best and still have difficulty but, in my mind, we are capable.

"This year, though, we seem to be more consistent although we don't have that one front runner, like a Joe Sheeran, that we can count on to get less than ten points . . . but I'm not apprehensive. We'll just do the best we can."

As usual, though, Woodall would prefer colder temperatures which might affect the California schools since they are unaccustomed to running in the mildest climate.

"It sometimes tends to affect them mentally . . . plus we're used to it so it could give us a slight advantage.

"Cal Poly has won it two straight years, and no team has won it three in a row . . . plus I think Cal Poly is not as strong as in the past although they've won all their meets. Still they're vulnerable."

EIU qualified for the nationals by edging Ferris State by two points in the Great Lakes Regional, so Woodall predicts they will crack the top five.

The Panther lineup is set. "Larry Schuldt (Rock Falls), Perry Edinger (Mattoon) and Tim Warneke (Park Forest-Crete/Monee) have been our one-two-three punch most of the time.

"Terry Donahue (Downers Grove-Montini) just missed All-American by six or seven places last year, but as yet he hasn't had the race he's capable of this fall.

"Mike Beresford (Danville) was our fifth runner in the nationals last year, so he's used to the competition. Chuck Elliott (Palatine) and Jase Travis (Bradley-Bourbonnais) are both running in their first nationals. Dave Houston (Granite City-South), a freshman, is the alternate," Woodall said.

"Schuldt's our leader . . . he's the team captain, very tenacious and has never made All-American so this is it . . . we're courting on his experience to help.

"It's an excellent course . . . everyone can start in one solid line. The first three quarters of a mile is uphill so it's quite taxing . . . it's tough to decide if you want to get your position quickly and then tire out or wait until an opportunity arises."