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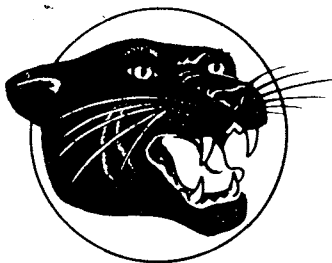
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Panther Sports News

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LS-AS-Hometowns

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University cross country coach Tom Woodall finds his team in an unfamiliar situation. After six years as one of the dominate programs in the midwest, the Panthers are still seeking a productive year after a slow start.

"It's been a strange year," Woodall said. "I've never had one quite like this one. It's really difficult to pinpoint one thing that has led to our troubles."

But Eastern's mentor has not lost complete faith. As his squad prepares for Saturday's (Oct. 17) 11 a.m. Illinois Intercollegiate meet at Normal, Woodall sheds optimism about his harriers' chances.

"Even though we haven't yet run up to our capabilities, I still believe that we could finish in the top three or four of the state teams," Woodall said. "Depth wise this is probably the toughest state meet we've run in."

Contributing to the overall depth which Woodall alluded to is a strong University of Illinois squad.

"The U of I is definitely the prerace favorite because they've beaten every other possible favorite earlier this year," the coach said. "But Illinois State and Southern (Illinois-Carbondale) could be right up there."

If Eastern is to be among the top teams at the state meet, Woodall said it must receive strong support from the junior duo which has led them thus far.

Tim Warneke (Park Forest/Crete-Monee) and Perry Edinger (Mattoon) have spearheaded the Eastern attack and Woodall looks for continued success from the tandem.

"Tim is coming on nicely. He finished 13th at Notre Dame . . . we've only had five runners cut the top 15 at Notre Dame since I've been here . . . we're looking for him to place high," Woodall said.

"If Edinger is recovered well enough from his recent illness, we'll expect him to do well, too," the coach said.

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Dave Houston (Granite City-South), Terry Donahue (Downers Grove-Montini) and Mike Beresford (Danville) will also be called upon to spark the Panther running attack, Woodall said.

"Dave Houston ran his best race ever last weekend . . . Terry Donahue has been consistently in the top five, but has been a little under the weather lately . . . Mike Beresford has been sick too, but I expect him to be ready to go Saturday," Woodall said.

And though Eastern has had its share of difficulties this season, history says that this weekend's meet could turn things around.

In the last 13 years, Eastern has finished runner-up eight times, while finishing fifth at last year's annual event.

"The Illinois Intercollegiate has been a good race for us in the past . . . we always seem to excell under the pressure that goes with a state meet," Woodall said.

"Though it's out of the question to finish with a great season, we still have a lot of goals in front of us," Woodall said. "We would just like to come close to our potential this weekend and hope that we can build on that from here on out. From there the season will hopefully take care of itself."