

Cross County  
Natalie Belva

With the fall season coming into gear, Virginia Wesleyan Cross Country is gearing up for high expectations.

For the first time in school history, the men's cross country team has been pre-season polled 4<sup>th</sup> in the Southeast region. The Southeast region is composed of twelve states, and a first or second place finish at regionals grants a bid to the National Tournament. The strong veteran men's team also polled second behind Lynchburg in the Old Dominion Athletic Conference pre-season poll.

Junior Sean Whitson obtained All-ODAC 1<sup>st</sup> team, All-South, and for the first time in school history, qualified for the National Tournament last season.

"Sean is a favorite both in the conference and in the region," quoted senior David Kidd.

With Lynchburg losing its two top runners, one of which being a National Champion, the men's team is looking to capitalize on their upperclassmen team.

Rob Bell, a senior for the marlins, has high hopes for what the team can accomplish.

"This year is a big stepping stone," said Bell. "We can accomplish a lot by staying healthy and putting in the miles."

"Our goal is to have a low spread," said Coach Matt Littleton. "We want the time difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> runner and our 5<sup>th</sup> runner to be as minimal as possible."

In order to achieve their potential and have a strong showing this season, both the men's and women's teams must remain healthy.

"There is a smart way to train, and there is a dumb way to train," said Kidd. "You have to build your mileage, be consistent, and ease into things."

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In order for the marlins to achieve success, they have based team goals around staying healthy.

“Running 130 miles a week takes a toll on your body,” said Kidd, “and that is where we can fall. The odds are against us.”

“The healthier we are, the better we will be,” said Littleton.

Women’s head Coach Krista Littleton pointed out that, “On our team they try and get at least two ice baths a week.”

In order to be strong in meets, runners rely on working together.

“We start off in a group, and then we stretch out and usually pair off,” said Kidd. “We feed off of each other’s energy.”

Both Bell and Kidd stated that running is “60% physical and 40% mental”.

“You don’t want to be out in no-man’s land by yourself,” said Kidd. “That’s tough.”

The women’s cross country team finished 4<sup>th</sup> in the Old Dominion Athletic Conference and were 4<sup>th</sup> in the pre-season poll. They will look to returners Kelly Fauth, a second team All-ODAC selection in 2009, Melissa Snyder, Michele Bryceland, and Katie Bennett to provide top finishes.

“We’re a young team,” said Littleton, “with just three upperclassmen; our main focus is to continually improve.”

The women’s team made a showing when they recently defeated Southern Virginia University Saturday, September 4, as they took the top five finishes.

The cross-country teams will look to start making their mark September 17, as they head to the Wolfpack Invitational in Cary, N.C.