Blue Raiders Finish 2nd At SBC Cross Country Meet; Lady Raiders 9th

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LITTLE ROCK, Ark. - Middle Tennessee had two runners finish in the top five to help lead the Blue Raiders to a second-place finish at the Aeropostale Sun Belt Cross Country Championships at Rebsamen Golf Course Saturday.

The second-place finish is Middle Tennessee's highest as a member of the SBC. The Lady Raiders finished ninth, also their highest finish since joining the league.

Louisiana-Lafayette won the men's meet with 58 points; five better than Middle Tennessee's 63, and Western Kentucky was a distant third. Western Kentucky won the women's meet with 33 points.

"I'm really proud of our team and the way we ran," Middle Tennessee coach Dean Hayes said. "The men put together their strongest race of the season and we anticipated a strong finish because of the strides we have made throughout the year. I was also pleased with our women's team because we had our best finish and we have several newcomers who I believe are only going to get better."

Geoffrey Lagat capped his Blue Raider career in fine fashion with a fourth-place finish to lead Middle Tennessee with a time of 26:11.2 in the 8K meet. It was Lagat's fastest time of the season in the 8K. Newcomer Derek Dell followed close behind in fifth with a time of 26:18.8. Both Lagat and Dell earned All-SBC honors.

Lagat capped his career as a four-time All-SBC selection in cross country with two first-place finishes, a second-place and this year's fourth place.

Steve Safstrom (26:35.9) also had his best time of the season in the 8K and finished 11th overall to cap his strong cross country season. Jonathan Guillou (27:00.0) was fourth for the Blue Raiders and 15th overall, while sophomore David Hughes (27:55.0) finished 28th.

"Four of our top five men had their best times of the season in the 8K and that was the difference,"

Hayes said. "I guess you can say they saved their best for last. Lagat and Dell were very strong, and Safstrom, who really came through big and had a good season, stepped up in this conference meet."

Miranda Gallaway was Middle Tennessee's top finisher on the women's side, placing 26th overall in the 5K race with a time of 20:31.9. Sara Lunning (21:03.3) was 37th overall, followed by Marjorie Gombert (21:19.0) at 39th. Kishara George (23:55.2) was Middle Tennessee fourth scorer and finished 60th overall, while Catherine Chester was 62nd with a time of 24:27.9

MEN

1 Louisiana, 58 points; 2. Middle Tennessee, 63; 3. Western Kentucky, 82; 4. South Alabama, 89; 5. North Texas, 126; 6. Arkansas State, 138; 7. Arkansas-Little Rock, 154; 8. New Orleans, 188; 9. New Mexico State, 240; 10. Florida International, 272.

Middle Tennessee Individual Scoring

4 Geoffrey Lagat 26:11.2
5 Derek Dell 26:16.8
11 Steve Safstrom 26:35.9
15 Jonathan Guillou 27:00.0
28 David Hughes 27:55.0

WOMEN

1Western Kentucky, 33 points; 2. Arkansas-Little Rock, 69; 3. Florida International, 123; 4. New Mexico State, 124; 5. North Texas, 129; 6. New Orleans, 142; 7. Arkansas State, 144; 8. Louisiana, 195; 9. Middle Tennessee, 224; 10. South Alabama, 226.

Middle Tennessee Individual Scoring

26 Miranda Gallaway 20:31.9
37 Sara Lunning 21:03.3
39 Marjorie Gombert 21:19.0
60 Kishara George 23:55.2
62 Catherine Chester 24:27.9

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