

November 14, 2009

Sangau qualifies for the NCAA Championships

First MT female runner to earn bid to NCAA Championships

Christian Lemon

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TUSCALOOSA, Ala. - It continues to be a season of firsts in 2009 for Middle Tennessee cross country. Two weeks after the men's team earned the program's first Sun Belt Conference Championship, Blue Raider Zamzam Sangau became the first female runner in school history to qualify for the NCAA Cross Country National Championships.

Sangau advances to the national meet after placing fifth overall at the NCAA South Regional Championships in Tuscaloosa, Ala., Saturday. She completed the women's 6,000-meter course in 20:30.22. In addition, she picks up her second-straight all-region honor. She will run at the NCAA Cross Country National Championships in Terre Haute, Ind., in two weeks.

"I am so proud of Zam," said head coach Dean Hayes. "When she came here her freshman year, she was an primarily an 800-meter runner. She was worked very hard the last four years and turned into a super competitor and really proven herself. It is great she qualified her senior year."

Jackie Serem finished 43th overall in 21:51.65, while Marla Bailey placed 48th in 21:57.36 as the other Blue Raider women's entrants.

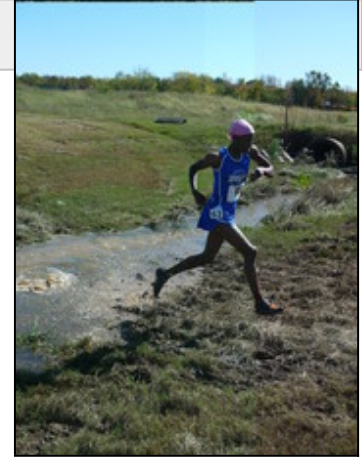
In the men's race, Festus Chemaoui placed 13th in 30:38.50 on the 10,000-meter course. Although Chemaoui did not automatically qualify for the NCAA championships, he still has a chance to earn an at-large bid as one of the top five runners not on an automatic qualifying team. With Alabama and Florida State both receiving automatic team spots, as the top two schools from the regional meet, Chemaoui needs the Auburn team to qualify at-large in order for him to earn an individual at-large bid.

"Festus ran well and put himself in a good position to qualify for the NCAAs. Auburn should qualify as a team which would move him into the top five individuals not qualifying as a team. He is one of our great team leaders and he deserves this."

The full field for the NCAA Championships will be announced Sunday at 7 p.m. Should Chemaoui qualify, he would be the first Blue Raider male runner to compete at the NCAA National Championships since Richard Russo in 1971, but the first under the current qualifying system.

Chris Mason was the only other Middle Tennessee male entrant in Saturday's race. The junior finished in 32:09.05 placing him 46th out of the 173 man field.

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Zamzam Sangau becomes the first Blue Raider women's runner to qualify for the NCAA Cross Country Championships. She will run in two weeks in Terre Haute, Ind. ()

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