2012 Cross Country schedule released

Four in-state meets highlight 2012 campaign

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Head coach Dean Hayes and the Middle Tennessee cross country teams have announced their 2012 schedule, looking to build on last year's success that saw the men finish third in the Sun Belt and the women sixth. The Blue Raiders will participate in four in-state competitions and one out-of-state prior to the Sun Belt Championships on October 27.

The squads will open their season on Aug. 31 at the Belmont-VU Opener in Nashville, Tenn., at 4 p.m. Last year, Robinson Simatei completed the 5K (3.1 miles) in 15:34.46 to take third, while Lucy Kapkiai navigated the women's 4K (2.49 miles) race in 14:25.86 for an eighth place finish.

"Robinson had a good cross country season last year," Hayes said. "He ran strong because he was chasing Justus David. He really likes to compete. He'll get out and chase after guys, which is always good."

Another runner expected to compete well is newcomer Daniel Ketter, a native of Kenya. Following those two, the men's top five will likely breakdown as Alden Dixon, a freshman from Arlington, Tenn., Silas Taiget, and Keith Davis.

MT will then travel to the PowerAde Invitational in Chattanooga, Tenn., on Sept. 8 and the Commodore Classic in Nashville, Tenn., on Sept. 15.

The Blue Raiders had runners perform well at both events last season. Kapkiai won both the PowerAde Invitational (2 miles) and the Commodore Classic (5K) with times of 10:57 and 17:53.40, respectively.

Kapkiai impressed as a freshman last year, and Hayes hopes that her "experience will give her the confidence to be even better."

While several of the Sun Belt's top female performers graduated last season, Hayes mentioned that one major challenger remains-Kristina Aubert of Arkansas State, who redshirted last year but won SBC Freshman of the Year honors in 2010.

David, the men's lone departure from last season due to eligibility exhaustion, won the PowerAde Invitational 5K in 14:57, while Simatei was fourth after running 15:20.

The lone out-of-state regular season competition is in Louisville, Ky., at the Greater Louisville Classic on Sept. 29 at 8:30 a.m.

The Blue Raiders will close out their regular seasons at the Front Runner Invitational on Oct. 13 in Chattanooga, Tenn., at 2 p.m. Kapkiai took first after running the two-mile course in just 11:07, while Autumn Gipson finished third (11:49). In the men's 5K, David took first (14:58), Simatei placed third (15:19) and Taiget was seventh (15:48).

After the Sun Belt Championships in Bowling Green, Ky., the Blue Raiders will look to compete at the NCAA Regionals on Nov. 9 in Tallahassee, Fla.

David won last year's Sun Belt Championship 8K (4.97 miles) race (24:25.70) and Simatei earned a sixth place finish (25:03.70). Kapkiai was first in the women's 5K (17:45.70), but ended her season in the South Regional 6K with a 19th place finish (21:05.04).

The campaigns will end on Nov. 17 in Louisville, Ky., at the Division I NCAA National Championships.

David was the lone MT competitor to make the 10K (6.2 miles) race last fall and finished 97th (30:47.20).

"Our schedule is the same as the past several years, and I really like the way it is," Hayes said. "I think this schedule prepares us well to do something in the Sun Belt."

All times announced are Central.

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