

SUN BELT CROSS COUNTRY WEEKLY RELEASE **AUGUST 29, 2012 · PRESEASON**

Contact: Travis Llewellyn (llewellyn@sunbeltsports.org)

.01 Poydras Street, Suite 2355, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130 • www.sunbeltsports.org.org • 504.299.9066, ext. 216



2012 SUN BELT CONFERENCE CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP October 27, 2012

Bowling Green, Kentucky Hosted By: Western Kentucky University

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

(As voted on by the Sun Belt Conference's 12 head coaches

MEN

- Western Kentucky (10 first place votes, 14 points)
- UALR (1 first place vote, 35 points) 2.
- Middle Tennessee (1 first place votes, 40 points) 3.
- South Alabama (60 points) 4.
- Georgia State (79 points) 5.
- North Texas (81 points)
- ULM (85 points) 7.
- FIU(89 points) 8.
- Florida Atlantic (106 points)
- Louisiana-Lafayette (107 points)
- 11. Arkansas State (109 points)
- Troy (124 points)

- Western Kentucky (6 first place votes, 23 points)
- Arkansas State (1 first place vote, 46 points)
- South Alabama (1 first place vote, 47 points)
- UALR (2 first place votes, 57 total points)
- North Texas (2 first place vote, 59 points)
- Middle Tennessee (67 points)
- Georgia State (74 points) 7.
- Florida Atlantic (78 points)
- 9. FIU (105 points)
- Louisiana-Lafayette (123 points)
- 11. Louisiana-Monroe (126 points)
- Troy (131 points)

WKU MEN & WOMEN PREDICTED TO REPEAT AS SUN BELT CHAMPIONS

NEW ORLEANS — Western Kentucky University was selected to win the Sun Belt Conference Men's and Women's cross country titles as selected by the leagues 12 head coaches, as announced by the conference office on Wednesday.

WKU's men's team topped the coach's poll with 10 of 12 first place votes for 14 total points. The Hilltoppers return two All-Sun Belt performers off of last year's championship team, including last year's Sun Belt Freshman of the year David Mokone.

Western Kentucky's women's team was predicted to the win the Women's cross country title for a seventh consecutive year. The Lady Toppers received seven first place votes for a total of 18 points. WKU will look to a new group of leaders after some key departures off of last year's squad. Senior Vasity Chemweno, a fourth place finisher at last year's Sun Belt Championships, looks to lead a group of

On the men's side, UALR came in second with 35 points and received one first place vote as well. Middle Tennessee was selected third with 40 points and received the only other first place vote.

Rounding out the rest of the men's poll was South Alabama in fourth (60 points), followed by new comer Georgia State (79 points), North Texas (81 points), Louisiana-Monroe (85 points), Florida International (89 points), Florida Atlantic (106 points), Louisiana-Lafayette (107 points), Arkansas State (109 points) and Troy (124 points)

In the women's poll, Arkansas State was selected second and received one first place vote for a total of 46 points. Closely behind them was South Alabama with a total of 47 points.

Rounding out the poll was UALR in fourth place (57 points), North Texas (59 points), Middle Tennessee (67 points), Georgia State (74 points), Florida Atlantic (78 points), Florida International (105 points), Louisiana-Lafayette (123 points), Louisiana-Monroe (126 points) and Troy (131 points)

Several Sun Belt teams were also ranked in the Preseason Regional Cross Country ranking by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA). For Men's Division I Middle Tennessee is ranked fourth (South Region), Western Kentucky 10th (Southeast Region) and UALR 11th (South Central Region). In the Women's Division I Preseason Regional Rankings Arkansas State is listed as 12th and UALR 14th. Both are located within the South Central Region.

	UPCOMING MEETS	
DATE	MEET	LOCATION
August 31, 2012	Belmont-VU Opener (Middle Tennessee, Western Kentucky)	Nashville, Tenn.
August 31, 2012	Florida Gulf Coast Invite	Fort Myers, Fla.
August 31, 2012	Clemson Invitational	Clemson, S.C
September 1, 2012	(Georgia State) Memphis Twilight	Memphis, Tenn.
September 1, 2012	(Arkansas State & Louisiana-Lafayette) Troy Opener	Troy, Ala
•	(South Alabama & Troy)	•
September 7, 2012	UALR Invitational (UALR & Arkansas State)	Little Rock, Ark
September 7, 2012	USF Invitational (Florida Atlantic & FIU)	Tampa, Fla
September 7, 2012	Auburn Invitational (Troy)	Auburn, Ala
September 8, 2012	PowerAde Invitational	Chattanooga, Tenr
September 8, 2012	(Middle Tennessee) GSU Invite	Hampton, Ga
September 8, 2012	(Georgia State) UTA Season Opener	Arlington, Texas
•	(North Texas)	•
September 14, 2012	Ragin' Cajuns Invite (Louisiana-Lafayette)	Lafayette, Li
September 15, 2012	UF Invitational (Florida Atlantic)	Gainesville, Fla
September 15, 2012	Commodore Classic	Nashville, Tenn
September 15, 2012	(Georgia State & Middle Tennessee) WKU Old Timers Classic	Bowling Green, Ky
September 15, 2012	(Western Kentucky) Mountain Dew Invitational	Gainesville, Fla
•	(FIU) Ken Garland Invitational	
•	(North Texas)	Denton, Texa
September 15, 2012	Azalea City Classic (South Alabama & Troy)	Mobile, Al
September 22, 2012	West Georgia Invitational (Georgia State)	Carrollton, Ga
September 22, 2012	UWF Invitational	Pensacola, Fla
September 29, 2012	(South Alabama) Greater Louisville Classic	Louisville, Ky
	ate, FIU, Middle Tennessee, South Alabama & Wester Rhodes College Invitational	n Kentucky) Memphis, Tenn
•	(Arkansas State)	•
•	McNeese Cowboy Stampede (Louisiana-Lafayette)	Lake Charles, Li
September 29, 2012	Cowboy Jamboree (North Texas)	Stillwater, Okla
October 5, 2012	Jaguar Invitational	Evans, Ga
October 5, 2012	(Georgia State) Florida State Classic	Tallahassee, Fla
October 6, 2012	(Troy) Disney World Invitational	Orlando, Fla
October 12, 2012	(Florida Atlantic) UCF Invitational	Orlando, Fla
·	(Florida Atlantic & FIU)	·
October 13, 2012 (UALR, Arkansas St	Chili Pepper Festival ate, Georgia State Louisiana-Lafayette &North Texas;	Fayetteville, Ark
October 13, 2012	Front Runner Invitational (Middle Tennessee)	Chattanooga, Tenr
October 13, 2012	Evansville Invitational	Evansville, Ind
October 13, 2012	(Western Kentucky) Mississippi College Invite	Jackson, Miss
October 13, 2012	(South Alabama) Coach O Invitational	Troy, Ala
October 20, 2012	(Troy) Last Chance Meet	Memphis, Tenn
		•
October 27, 2012	Sun Belt Championships	Bowling Green, Ky
November 10, 2012	NCAA Regionals	Various locations





2012 SUN BELT CONFERENCE CROSS COUNTRY

TEAM NOTES

UALR TROJANS



The UALR men's and women's cross country teams enter the season at No. 11 and No. 14, respectively, in the USTFCCCA South Central Region preseason rankings ... The UALR men return a pair of All-Sun Belt honorees in Felix Maritim and Dustin Mettler in addition to a number of other strong performers from 2011 . . . Maritim and Mettler each earned top-ten finishes at last year's SBC Championships, placing seventh and eighth, respectively, to help lead the Trojans to a second-place overall finish . . . Brian Giken, Markus Pearson and Nathan Carr are also still in the mix for the UALR men . . . That

trio finished just outside the top ten last year in Bowling Green, Ky., placing 11th, 12th and 13th, respectively, to narrowly miss All-SBC honors ... On the women's side, UALR returns Erika LaCroix, a 2011 All-Sun Belt performer who finished seventh at last year's SBC Championships and picked up the victory at the UALR Invitational ... Mackenzie Bloom, who placed fourth at last year's UALR Invite, joins Marissa DeLaPaz, who added a seventh-place finish at last year's Arkansas Tech Twilight Run, as two additional returners for the women ... UALR's 2012 slate features three regular season meets before the Sun Belt Championships on Oct. 27 in Bowling Green, Ky. . . . Both the UALR men and women will begin their 2012 season at home with the UALR Invitational at Rebsamen Park on Friday, Sept. 7.

Arkansas State RED WOLVES

The Arkansas State men's and women's Cross Country teams enter the 2012 season with



high expectations. A strong class returns on the men's side, led by senior Briar Becton who placed in the top-60 at the Sun Belt Conference meet last season. Junior Devin Reed also returns to help anchor the team, while sophomores Brock Westerman and Luke Lindsley will also provide depth and push for the

top spots on the squad.

On the women's side, senior Sam Salinas will head a strong group of runners. Salinas finished 14th at the SBC meet in 2011, while junior Rexi Parcells finished 18th. Sophomore Chelsey Roberson will look to improve upon a very strong freshman season, while fellow sophomore Tilda Helgesson will also compete for a top spot on the team.

The Red Wolves open the 2012 season at the Memphis Twilight on Aug. 25, and will compete in six total meets before the SBC Championship in late October. Other meets include the UALR Invite (Sept. 7), Greater Louisville Classic (Sept. 29), the Rhodes College Invitational (Sept. 29) and the Chile Pepper Invitational (Oct. 13).

Florida Atlantic owls

Florida Atlantic returns its top two runners from the men's side for the cross country season. Sophomore



Michael Vidal and senior Ryan Davis lead an experienced group of eight runners back from a year ago. Vidal, from Miami, looks to translate his success from the spring, where he set two school records and was 12 seconds away from another while competing at various outdoor track events. Davis, hailing from Miramar, has been in the top three each of his three seasons with the team, and was the

top FAU finisher (28th place) at last season's SBC Championships. Off the course, he was also named the 2012 SBC Male Sporting Behavior Award winner.

On the women's side, at least experience-wise, the opposite is true. Most of the seasoned runners departed, and 10 "young and dedicated runners with lots of promise," according to head coach Alex Smolka, have joined the squad. The returnees are led by seniors Megan Bary (Jacksonville) and Stacy Paton (Stuart, FL), the latter earning a 30th-place finish at the 2011 Championships. Like Davis, the women's team has also always had a strong showing in the classroom, as the squad earned the highest fall 2011 G.P.A. of all of FAU's athletic teams.

FIU PANTHERS

No notes provided



Louisiana-Lafayette RAGIN CAJUNS The old adage says that "youth

will be served" and that's never



been more true for Ragin' Cajuns cross country than now. After one season with the program, head track/cross country coach Lon Badeaux has made tremendous strides with his first recruiting class and he retooled the UL cross country rosters on both the men's and women's side.

On the men's side, stalwarts Zach France and Willie Allen are back along with sophomores Courtland Privat and Patrick Spiller. Joining them are five freshmen each with carrying impressive credentials. France has been UL's lead runner the past two seasons and is expected to lead the young group this season.

On the women's side, the lone returnee is Genevieve Roy who is a sophomore. Mix in five freshmen and UL women's cross country has undergone a youth movement.

Badeaux's recruiting efforts on the women's side brought it highly regarded athletes like the men's squad. With Roy the lone returning runner, UL is seeking to receive dividends from its talented freshman class to make an improvement on last season's 10th place finish at the Sun Belt meet.

Louisiana-Monroe WARHAWKS

The men's team enter the 2012 season firmly riding the capable shoulders of



senior Daniel Mutai, who has qualified for the NCAA national meet the past two years. Mutai, who finished third at the 2011 Sun Belt Conference Championships, enters the season as a candidate to become ULM's first cross country All-American ever. He will be joined by fellow seniors Silah Chumba and Britt Koestler to create an experienced trio to lead the

Warhawks. Chumba, who finished 20th in the Sun Belt last year, is the number two returner for ULM and has the potential to join Mutai as an All-Sun Belt performer. Newcomer Hillary Kirwa, a transfer from Cameron University, could figure into the conference mix as well. Eddie Lewis and Jamel Sams will complete the Warhawk lineup.

The ULM women are led by senior Sharon Sason, who finished 62nd at the Sun Belt Championships a year ago. Sason comes off a solid spring track season and will take the reins from the graduated Denise Meyers. Sason will be joined by sophomores Anakaren Lopez and Bethany Koestler in forming the Warhawk front line this fall. Newcomer Teona Glave is a mid-distance specialist for the ULM track team, and could prove to be dangerous at the longer distance. Danielle O'Donnell will also compete for the Warhawks.



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TEAM NOTES

Middle Tennessee Blue RAIDERS

Head coach Dean Hayes and the Middle Tennessee cross country teams

are looking to build on last year's success as they kick off the season at the Belmont-VU Opener in Nashville, Tenn., this Friday at 4 p.m.

The men return Nos. 2, 3 and 4 from last season's team that finished third in the Sun Belt Conference Championships. Robinson Simatei (6th), Silas

Taiget (14th) and Keith Davis (18th) will play a key in MT's chase for the Sun Belt title. Other runners expected to compete are Daniel Ketter, a native of Kenya, and Alden Dixon, who placed third in the 3,200 and the 1,600 meter runs at the 2012 TSSAA State Championships last season.

"We may not have a true number one like we did with Justus Davis, but I think we are more solid," Hayes said. "In cross country, it's better to be solid all-around than just that one quy."

For the women, 2011 returners are Autumn Gipson, Stephanie Smith, Rachel Islam and Tressanique Hampton. Gipson finished 21st at last year's Sun Belt Championships, while Islam (49th), Smith (66th) and Hampton (68th) helped solidify a sixth-place finish at the conference meet. Lucy Kapkiai, who led the Blue Raiders in every race last season, will not run opening weekend but will return later in the season.

North Texas MEAN GREEN

North Texas coach Sam Burroughs enters his third year at the helm of the Mean Green cross country

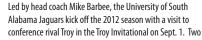


Results have come quick, Burroughs' first two years at North Texas saw five All-Conference performers in cross country and four new school records on the track. Burroughs also received the Women's Cross Country Coach of the Year Award in

2011.

The Mean Green women's cross country team finished second at the SBC Championships, its highest finish since 2003. North Texas will only have three returning runners this season in Elisha Arends (So.), Carly Griffith (Sr.) and Leesa Morales (So.). The Mean Green women will be adding 12 newcomers including breakout track star, Jo Adams.

South Alabama JAGUARS





weeks later the Jags host the Azalea City Classic in Mobile Sept. 15. The following week, the team will send a limited roster to compete as individuals at the UWF invitational in Pensacola, Fla. On Sept. 29, the Jaguars head to Louisville, Ky. For the Greater Louisville Classic. The final tune-up before postseason competition will be the Mississippi College Invite on Oct. 13 in Jackson, Miss.

The Jaguar men's team enters the 2012 season with a relatively young squad that has only one upperclassman in junior Alex Shields. Despite the team's youth, the Jaguars return five sophomore runners from the 2011 season lan Bordelan, Justin Housley, Robert Mann, Derek Westbrook, and Ronny Wilson—each of whom brings valuable experience in NCAA competition. Newcomers Corey Cotter, Patrick Rohr, and Buddy Soto will also be looking to contribute as freshmen.

The women's team will be led by seniors Tori Lawson, Kendra Lowe and Mary Finn. The Jags also have three juniors returning in Leah Hixon, Melissa McCluskey, and transfer Salome Lecoq, as well as sophomore runners Kristin Parry and Shannen Weyer. Alivia Bryars and Meghan Hawkins are the two freshmen who join the squad this season.

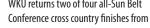
Troy TROJANS



The Troy Trojans boast an eventful 2012 schedule, featuring two home meets, the Troy Invitational and the Coach "O" Invitational. Troy will travel to Auburn, Ala., to compete in the Auburn Cross Country Invitational and to Tallahassee, Fla., to participate in the Florida State University Invitational, both of which the Trojans have had success in previous years. The Troians will also travel to Mobile to try their hand at the Azalea City Classic. Troy is anchored by senior Morgan Paulson for the women and junior Kemper Morton for the men. Paulson finished in the top 50 in every meet of the

2011 season and recorded her personal best in the 5K run at the Sun Belt Conference Championships with a time of 19:47.5. Kemper Morton had his best showing of the 2011 season at the Troy Invitational, where he ran the 5K in 17:11.33.

Western Kentucky HILLTOPPERS WKU returns two of four all-Sun Belt





last year's championship squad. Sophomore David Mokone, 2011's Sun Belt Freshman of the Year, headlines a Hilltopper team looking for back-to-back Sun Belt titles. Mokone finished fourth at the 2011 Sun Belt Conference Cross Country Championships at Kereiakes Park in Bowling Green while fellow returnee Kyle

Chettleburgh placed ninth. Senior Joseph Chebet enters his first season running cross country for WKU and is also expected to contribute at a high level after placing 23rd in the 5,000-meter final at the NCAA Outdoor Championships in June.

For the Lady Toppers it'll be a group of new faces trying to capture WKU's seventh straight Sun Belt Conference championship. WKU loses two-time defending Sun Belt champion Marion Kandie and Michelle Finn, who was also an all-conference selection the previous two seasons. Senior Vasity Chemweno, a fourth place finisher at last year's Sun Belt Championships, looks to lead a group of youngsters this season. Jenkins expects big things out of freshmen Louise Hill-Stirling and Lindsey Hinken.

GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS

The Georgia State cross country teams begin competition in the Sun Belt Conference in 2012 after spending seven years in the Colonial Athletic Association. The Panther women's team placed third in the CAA championship last season, while the men were fourth.

GSU had three All-CAA competitors in Hannah Stefanoff and Katharine Showalter on the women's side and Valentin Poncelet for the men. Stefanoff was also named the conference Rookie of the Year and set a school record with five Runner of the Week awards during the season.

At the NCAA South Regional meet, the GSU women finished 14th and the men were 15th with Poncelet earning All-Region honors. Showalter also contributed an impressive outdoor track and field season by winning the conference in the 3,000m steeplechase and finishing second in the 1,500m.

The women's team starts the 2012 season ranked 14th in the South Region by the USTFCCCA preseason poll. Head Coach Chris England enters his third season at GSU and returns twelve letterwinners from the 2011 roster; nine on the women's side and three for the men. The Panthers host their lone home meet of the season, the GSU Invite, on Saturday, Sept. 8 in Hampton, Ga.