

Running in packs keeping teams competitive

By Zack Feldman
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Because the Penn State cross country teams have been running in packs all season, the end result is almost always different.

And going into the program's second home meet this season, the Penn State National — at 10 a.m. Saturday at the Blue-White Golf Courses — the teams are looking for some consistency.

Four meets in, the No. 30 women's team has finished four different first-place finishers, while comparatively, Vince McNally and Kyle Dawson each have two first-place finishes.

The No. 23 men's team has broken into what Ryan Foster called a trio of packs, with McNally and Dawson leading, the 3-5 runners trailing toward the front, and the remainder sticking together further back.

But Natalie Bower, Penn State's top finisher at the Roy Griak Invitational in Minnesota, said the

women's new strategy this year — keeping the whole team in a collective pack for as much of the race as possible — has kept the runners motivated through the toughest parts of the races.

"Running in a pack not only helps with like the team part of it, but it gives you that motivation to keep going," Bower said. "All the girls work so well together, pushing each other and motivating each other to continue forward. When you don't have your teammates around you, it can be really challenging."

Runners have said being at home gives the team an advantage in familiarity with their own course because the runners have the chance to practice on their specific course, learning the landscape and knowing when to pick up their pace.

Saturday is the second of only three meets at home this season, something Bower said motivates the runners to give their best effort.

"We want to do our very best on our home course, because having home advantage, I think we just want to do our best to stay in the rankings and move up if we can," Bower said.

"I think our team is definitely capable of moving up numerous spots."

The women's team is looking to move up in the rankings, while the men's team is two weeks removed from what coach Beth Alford-Sullivan called the most impressive performance in the past couple of seasons.

At the Notre Dame Invitational, the team beat three top-20 teams, including then-No. 5 Alabama, leading the team to a No. 23 ranking the following week, their highest ranking since 2000.

The men are part of a 27-team field, which includes No. 14 Syracuse, while the women's team will face off against Mid-Atlantic region rival No. 1 Villanova, as well as No. 7 Syracuse.

Alford-Sullivan has said she

does not actively follow the rankings, however it will most likely be these rankings dictating which teams will make it to the NCAAs.

Bower said this weekend will be a good stepping stone for both teams, but a bad performance wouldn't be the end of the team's chances at postseason success.

"I think we have to wait and see how we do this weekend and progress from there," Bower said.

"The bigger meets are still ahead of us. We'll still have Big Tens and [Mid-Atlantic] Regionals.

I think our team is strong enough where we will be able to move up enough where we can have that chance to make it to Nationals.

"We just have to realize how good of a team we are and I think we'll be able to come together when it matters."

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Kelly Rootes-Murdy/Colegian
Natalie Bower (right) breaks ahead of teammate Caitlin Lane at the Sept. 11 Harry Groves Invitational.

Lady Ruggers look for continued success following bye week

By Brandt Gelman
and Andrew Pogorzelski
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

After their first bye week of the 2010 fall season, the Lady Ruggers are eager to return to the field against Delaware at 1 p.m. Saturday.

With an extended break between matches, the Lady Ruggers look to regain the cohesiveness on the field, which allows them to compete at a championship level.

Coach Pete Steinberg has made it a priority to ensure the less

experienced players have not backtracked in their development due to the break in their schedule.

"The goal for us this week was to try and take all our new players and get them on the same page," Steinberg said.

While the team has had virtually no problem scoring against its opponents so far this season, outscoring them 125-39 through three contests, Steinberg said

there is still room for improvement on the offensive side of the ball.

"We want to have our attack in shape, so when we attack we're sure we're going the same way and putting our forwards in place," he said.

Despite being a defensive juggernaut, Steinberg demands for his players to be more physical in their defensive pursuits.

"There's two defensive things we're working on: Making sure we build our defensive line by not being focused on the ball and looking up and see who we are going to

tackle," he said. "Then when we go in and make the tackle to make sure we are fighting for the ball."

Steinberg will continue his integration of his young talent with proven veterans against Delaware, in order for new players to get acquainted with the game and their teammates.

His varying lineups have not affected their championship morale, and their hopes to repeat this November.

"We still don't know who our best team is, so over the next two weeks we're going to be doing a bit of a rotation," Steinberg said. "It's

really going to be against Navy and the EPRU [Eastern Pennsylvania Rugby Union] championships that we're looking to play our best side."

The continuous mixing and matching of his best talent with less experienced players may seem quizzical to some, but Steinberg is sticking to his guns.

"The way players get better is they play next to better players," Steinberg said. "The more time they have with better players, the more they will improve."

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Steinberg

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By Jacqueline Bigar

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Friday, Oct. 15, 2010:
This year, many opportunities evolve, pointing to a new direction. This transformation could involve your daily life. You have many interests; you might decide to make one of them a business. You have a tendency to overreact and go to extremes. Take good care of yourself. If you are single, several people could fight up your life. Get to know each person better before deciding that anyone is right! If you are attached, the two of you could share a new pastime or interest, drawing you closer. AQUARIUS always whips up the fun.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic, 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-Soso; 1-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
**** Whether it is the knowledge that the weekend is heading in or a change in the planets, you don't care. You feel empowered. Dot your 'i's and cross your 't's before you leave work. Gather with others and christen this weekend.
Tonight: Let the fun begin.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
**** You certainly will need to focus on the here and now. Others want your remedies and solutions. Please share them, as they do make a difference. Tonight: Not feeling as carefree as you might like.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
**** Pull back in order to gain a complete perspective. Not everyone thinks in terms like you. The broader your outlook and the more empathy you express the more likely you will find an

agreement. Tonight: Opt for the unusual.
CANCER (June 21-July 22)
**** You might want to relate to a key associate directly but can't. Work on the basic issues. Be a better listener, and absorb new information with care. Listen to what is being shared. Tonight: One-on-one time.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
**** Be an efficiency expert and get as much done as possible early on. You will want to be more innovative and dynamic in your choices. Positively greet a partner's sometimes odd ideas. Clear out as much work as possible. Tonight: Let your hair down. It has been a very wild week.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
**** Others challenge you but might not intend to upset you. Use their input more positively than in the past. You'll see a matter very differently if you do, and allow for an unusual resolution. Tonight: Relax in your favorite manner.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
**** You could feel swamped by an overwhelming amount of requests. You might not want to handle a personal matter as you have in the past. Let go and flow. Lose your judgments for a day. Tonight: Finally, time to be yourself.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
**** Accomplishment demands unusual creativity and answers. You come up with many ideas, which head in from out of left field. Be willing to test them out on others. A new love interest or child could be overwhelming. Tonight: Head on home.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
**** You know what others need. The choice is just how much you want or

need to help them. Be aware of what is going on here. A family member can be quite alluring, but do you want to get involved? Tonight: Others are happy to find you.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
**** You smile and come out ahead of the game. You know what is needed. Though you can be quite assertive and direct, you also are capable of a mini-revolution if need be. In your head, you justify this behavior with "you gotta do what you gotta do." Tonight: On top of your game.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
**** Rest assured that there are many different approaches to a money matter. The smart move is to weigh the pros and cons. Could you be too optimistic about one set of options? Tonight: You will know exactly what to do. Have fun!

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
**** You could be slightly overwhelmed by an opportunity. You could try to push someone to do something your way. Know what you want before creating a lot of uproar. You are all smiles during the day. Tonight: Do only what you want.

BORN TODAY:
Philosophy: Friedrich Nietzsche (1844), former Chrysler chairman Lee Iacocca (1924), Duchess of York Sarah Ferguson (1959) ***

Jacqueline Bigar is on the Internet at www.jacquelinebigar.com.
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