

SPORTS

Cross Country Encouraged by Lehigh Showing

BY NATE KUHRT
SENIOR STAFF

UR Men's and Women's Cross Country (URXC) debuted their current top squads in Bethlehem, PA this past weekend at the Paul Short Run. The meet is hosted by Lehigh University and draws teams from all over the country to compete against some of the nation's best.

To start off the meet for UR, the Men's team competed in the Collegiate Men's Brown Race against a very deep field. The UR men finished 22nd out of 45 teams, behind strong performances from seniors Dan Nolte and Eric Franklin. The team also demonstrated great depth with a spread of 30 seconds between its numbers three and six runners.

This is encouraging for URMXC as it enters the latter half of its season.

"We had a good showing today among a competitive field on a fast course," Franklin, a team captain, said. "I think a lot of us [including myself] got out really well, struggled through the middle of the race, and brought it home strong."

Looking at the race, the team has a lot to be proud of. The 'Jackets averaged 26:06 for its top five runners—45 seconds faster per athlete than last year's team.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF UR ATHLETICS

Senior runner Christopher Cook sprints during the Paul Short Run at Lehigh University this weekend.

Although this course may have been fast, according to Franklin, the race conditions were far from ideal. Considering that the Paul Short Run is an early-season meet, and that the team is coming off a difficult week of training, UR's performance demonstrates that they have great potential moving forward.

Nolte expressed that this performance was a sign of encouragement.

"This performance sets us up well to continue improving into the post-season, and ultimately reach our goal of qualifying for nationals as a team in November."

After the solid performance from the Men's team, the URWXC com-

peted in the Collegiate Women's Brown Race against a variety of Division I, II, and III teams. Being ranked 12th in Division III entering the season, the team had anticipated running against top teams with the end goal of improving on their nationals performance from last season.

The Women's Yellowjackets finished

26th of 42, rallying through a great effort from the team's underclassmen. The team had a one-through-five spread of 55 seconds. Most notably, the 'Jackets top seven consisted of six underclassmen, showing great potential for growth this season, as well as for years to come.

Moving into the heart of the season, the Yellowjackets still have room to improve from this past weekend's performance. With this in mind, URWXC has hopes of improving on its national performance.

"Our goals for this season are to return to nationals and have a strong showing on the national stage, as well as being competitive in our region this year, which is historically strong," senior captain Annie Peterson said.

In order to compete against regional powerhouses like St. Lawrence (6th of 42 in the Collegiate Women's Brown Race) or Ithaca (8th of 42 in the Collegiate Women's Brown Race), everyone will need to stay healthy. Members of UR's top squad have been battling injuries.

Overall, the weekend was a success for both UR squads and a promising sign moving into championship season. Hopes are high to send both to nationals.

Kuhrt is a member of the Class of 2017.

Women's Soccer on the Way to Postseason Play

BY TREVOR WHITESTONE
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UR Women's Soccer revitalized their season in momentous fashion Saturday, earning their first victory after a series of losses and draws.

The Yellowjackets (1-4-4) prevailed 3-1 over Washington University (7-2-1, #12 in a Division III coaches poll) in the University Athletic Association opener for both squads.

This means that, despite their struggles to begin the season, the 'Jackets are on a prime trajectory for postseason play, for which they could secure a berth by finishing with the best regular-season record in their conference.

Rochester players made the most of their opportunities against Washington, scoring on three out of four shots on goal. Senior Jean Chakmakas opened the scoring 12 minutes in, depositing a bouncing ball from the endline.

It was her second straight game with a goal, but she was far from done.

It took her only ten minutes to get her second go-ahead goal of the game, immediately after Washington knotted the score on a penalty kick. This made three goals in the last 32 minutes for Chakmakas—a hot streak that has been paramount to the reemergence of the team's offense.

To seal things off, freshman Jorie Freitag scored with 10 minutes to go. Sophomores and twins Megan and McKenzie Runyan assisted on the first and third goals, respectively.

Making 75 percent of their shots on goal is a huge deal for a team

that, coming into the game, was converting those chances at a 12 percent clip.

Seventy-five percent is an unsustainable figure, to be sure, but at the same time, one has to wonder if the previous level of inaccuracy from a team so talented was more due to lack of execution or simple bad luck within a small sample size.

Saturday night's game puts that figure up to a more expected 17 percent.

For reference, the initial percentage would rank the team in the bottom tenth percentile in Division III (albeit against some talented goalkeepers), while the more recent number still places them in the bottom third. Perhaps removing some mental blockage from the goal will cause this upward trend to continue.

The team reached the three-goal plateau for the first time all season against a team ranked eighth in the nation defensively, per the Massey Ratings. In fact, Washington went their first five games without allowing a single goal, and had only allowed two in their opening nine games entering Saturday.

Put another way, the 'Jackets scored more on the Bears' that evening than all other opponents combined that season.

On the defensive side of things, the Yellowjackets were able to keep things together, in no small part due to the goalkeeping of freshman Gwen Haffenden, who saved eight of nine shots sent directly her way to bring her season save percentage to a stellar .829.

The team allowed 20 shots overall, showcasing how the visiting

Bears kept the pressure on for the entire game. But Rochester refused to buckle, and was able to keep the game in check early and then protect their lead for good once they reacquired it.

On the season, the defense has been solid, but has been haunted by early lapses.

Tuesday night's game unfolded in this all-too familiar manner, as the host 'Jackets conceded two goals to Nazareth (6-2-2) in the first 8:41. It was a deflating start for a team that was looking for its first victory, and things didn't improve when the visitors struck again in minute 26.

The score held until Chakmakas started her hot streak and put Rochester on the board with 11 minutes to go, off an assist from Megan Runyan. However, the comeback stopped there, as the visitors prevailed 3-1.

The goals allowed at the game's outset highlighted a trend for the 'Jackets that has seen them face early deficits. The most extreme exhibition of this was in their game at William Smith, in which they fell into a 3-0 deficit in the first 13:57. This was one of the four instances, Tuesday included, in which the team allowed their opponents to score in the first five minutes of play.

The accompanying histogram shows that the 'Jackets have conceded seven goals in the first 15 minutes of Tuesday's game. This means that nearly 60 percent of opponent goals had been scored in the first 17 percent of game time.

There are two possible takeaways here.

One is that their opponents have

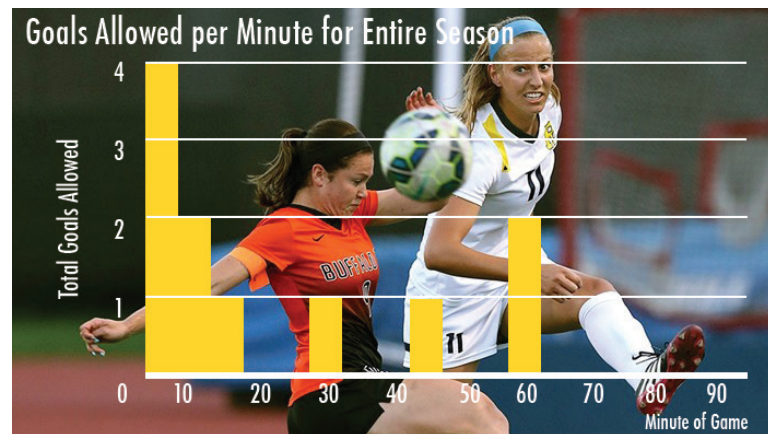


PHOTO COURTESY OF UR ATHLETICS | GRAPHIC BY MIRA BODEK
INFORMATION PROVIDED BY TREVOR WHITESTONE

UR Women's Soccer seems to be on track to make it to the playoffs.

focused their efforts on goal prevention after securing early leads, which seems like a decent theory for the games against William Smith and Nazareth. However, William Smith took four more shots than they did in the first half, and Nazareth took seven in the second half, compared to 10 in the first. It's difficult to conclude that they were sitting on their lead.

On the other hand, Rochester may simply not be playing up to their defensive potential in the early game. Consider that the team has allowed only five goals in the final 75 minutes of play this season. If they were to hold this rate for all 90 minutes, they would have allowed six goals so far, or an elite 0.7 goals per game. Instead, their goal rate against average was a decent 1.3, which, until Saturday, hasn't been enough to overcome the team's struggles on offense.

With all the speculation about what was causing Rochester's slump, it's been easy to forget that none of this has occurred against just any competition.

Their strength of schedule up to this point has been second out of 408 listed teams on the Massey Ratings, meaning UR has effectively faced the toughest possible schedule. This is part of the reason why the 'Jackets were, according to Massey, still ranked in the top 25 percent of teams in the country, and in the top 12.5 percent defensively, prior to Saturday's victory.

These numbers suggest that, against a more average schedule, the team could be thriving. Even when future games are included, however, their strength of schedule rank remains second.

Should the 'Jackets continue to pull out impressive victories, they will put themselves right back on the map and build up confidence as the season progresses.

They've already taken a huge step by taking their first game of conference play, and can continue their resurgence when they host non-conference opponent St. John Fisher on Tuesday.

Whitestone is a member of the Class of 2019.