

## Men's Cross Country Ready for 2009 Season

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (UWECBlugolds.com) - The UW-Eau Claire men's cross country team is ready for the 2009 season opener against collegiate competition with the Luther College All-American Invite in Decorah, Iowa on Saturday.

The Blugolds are currently ranked nationally at No. 31 in the latest U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association top 35 poll. Last year Eau Claire finished fourth in the conference and behind six returning letterwinners, look to improve on that mark.

Leading the returners will be **Chris Wirtz** (Sr.-Weston, WI/D.C. Everest). Last year, Wirtz competed at the NCAA Division III national meet, the first men's runner to compete at nationals since the 2001 season. He took 166th place in the field of 278 runners.

In addition to Wirtz, three other runners who finished in the top five at the NCAA Division III regional meet, where the Blugolds finished sixth last year, return to this year's team. They include **Brent Kann** (Sr.-Rice Lake, Wis.), **Tom Breitbach** (Jr.-Muskego, Wis.) and **Ben Pearson** (Sr.-Clinton, Wis.). All three finished 63rd or better. A total of five out of the seven runners at last year's regional meet return to this year's squad.

On this year's team there are six seniors, seven juniors, six sophomores and five freshmen.