

# WIAC Championship up Next for Cross Country

By: Kevin Meinholz, Sports Information Director

Posted: Wednesday, October 28, 2009 at 10:16 PM

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (UWECBlugolds.com) - The UW-Eau Claire men's and women's cross country teams are set for the 2009 Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) Championship on Saturday in Whitewater.

This year's championship will represent the 49th running of the men's meet and 32nd edition of the women's event.

In the women's race, UW-Eau Claire will aim for a third consecutive crown. If successful, the Blugolds would become the first team to garner three straight first-place finishes since UW-Oshkosh won 15 consecutive titles from 1986-2000.

A year ago, UW-Eau Claire totaled 42 team points to outdistance UW-Oshkosh's second-place sum of 62. UW-La Crosse placed third with 65.

The Blugolds, ranked fourth in the nation, return four of their top five runners from last year's championship. **Beth Easker** (*Jr.-Wittenberg, Wis./Wittenberg-Birnamwood*) is the top returner as she took sixth place overall a year ago and was the second finisher for the Blugolds. She has competed in four races this season and has been Eau Claire's top finisher in three. As a team the Blugolds have won their last three events and took third in the first two of the year.

On the men's side, Eau Claire will seek to improve on its fourth place finish from a season ago. UW-Stevens Point won last year's event while UW-Oshkosh was second and UW-La Crosse was third.

The Blugolds, ranked 30th in the nation, have been running well as of late. They won their Lake Wissota Meet last weekend and the Blugold Open earlier in October while finishing sixth at the University of Minnesota Roy Griak Invitational and eighth at the UW-La Crosse Jim Drews Invitational.

The Eau Claire men return five out of six runners from last year's WIAC Championship, led by **Chris Wirtz** (*Sr.-Weston, Wis./D.C. Everest*). He has competed in just two events so far this year but has done well, most recently leading Eau Claire with a 20th place overall finish at the UW-La Crosse Jim Drews Invite. At last year's conference championship he took 11th overall.

The top seven runners in each race will receive All-WIAC first team recognition, while runners placing eighth through 14th earn All-WIAC second team accolades. Individuals finishing 15th through 20th claim honorable mention recognition.