Cross Country Set for NCAA Nationals

By: Kevin Meinholz, Sports Information Director
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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (UWECBlugolds.com) - The UW-Eau Claire men's and women's cross country teams are set to compete in Saturday's NCAA Division III Championship, hosted by Baldwin-Wallace College at Highland Park Golf Course in Highland Hills, Ohio.

The women's 6K race will get underway at 10 a.m. (Central) while the men's 8K competition will start at 11 a.m. (Central).

On the women's side, defending national champion Middlebury College (Vt.) is back to defend its crown, but the Blugolds will look to compete well at this year's race. Eau Claire comes in to the championship ranked second in the nation. The Blugolds have already won the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and NCAA Midwest Regionals this season, while they took fifth at last year's national meet.

Beth Easker *(Jr.-Wittenberg, Wis./Wittenberg-Birnamwood)* and **Alyssa Sybilrud** *(So.-Savage, Minn./Burnsville)* led Eau Claire last weekend at the regional and were the Blugolds' second and third finishers at the national meet a season ago.

On the men's side, the Blugolds will compete as a team at nationals for the first time since 1999. It will also be the first time both the men's and women's teams will be together at the national meet. Last season **Chris Wirtz** *(Sr.-Weston, Wis./D.C. Everest)* participated at nationals as an individual. He finished in 166th place overall.

At regionals this season, Wirtz led Eau Claire as he took ninth place overall. The 20th-ranked Blugolds finished in fifth place out of 39 teams at the Midwest Regional last Saturday. North Central College (Ill.) won the regional meet with an impressive score of 21 points and will look to capture its 13th national title after finishing as runner-up last season.