

Cross country win NCAA regionals



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The women's cross country team poses for a photo with their trophy.

By Julian Markese
Sports Editor

After dominating the NE10 Championship, the women's and men's cross country teams were victorious in the NCAA Division II East Regional in Hopkinton, New Hampshire. Both teams will now advance to the NCAA Division II National Championship.

This marks the fourth straight title for the men and the second ever East Regional title for the women. The Owls won both individual titles, as well as securing an additional podium spot in each race. Runner Courtney Henchcliffe, a senior, is the first woman from the university to win an individual championship at

the regional level. She finished the 6K with a time of 21:29.1, almost 10 seconds clear of the next closest competitor. Runner PJ Dauphinais, a junior, finished third with a time of 21:46.2, marking a personal best for her. Runner Jonathan Volpe, a senior, finished first place in the 10K with a time of 31:02.8. He was fol-



The men's cross country team poses for a photo with their trophy.

lowed by runner Colton Sallum, a freshman, who took home third place, finishing at 31:42.6. For their efforts over the course of the season, several Owls were recognized with individual awards. Both Head Coaches John Wallin and Melissa Stoll Funaro won a NE10 Coach of the Year award. It was

Wallin's fourth straight time receiving the award, marking his fifth total. After winning the NE10 and regional individual championships, Henchcliffe and Volpe were both recognized as the Runners of the Year. Henchcliffe is the second women's runner to win the award for the Owls, while Volpe is the

third men's runner. Sallum won Rookie of the Year. He is the fourth men's runner to do so for the university in as many years. The teams will travel to Kenosha, Wisconsin on Saturday, Nov. 22 to compete in the NCAA Division II Championships. Thirty-four schools will be competing on both sides.



PHOTO | WILLIAM GAGNE

Guard Taeya Steinauer, a sophomore, shoots a three.

Steinauer sisters spur strong start

By Draven Dabrowski
Sports Writer

The Steinauer sisters turned the Owls' home opener into a statement, combining for 49 points as the university overwhelmed Georgian Court University 104-59 in a fast, physical performance that set the tone for their season. The team fed off the sisters' early spark. Forward Rheyne Steinauer, a senior, lit up the floor with confident shooting and transition scoring, while guard Taeya Steinauer, a sophomore, controlled the paint in her Owls debut. "Playing with her again is honestly heartwarming," Rheyne said. "Giving her assists, her passing to me, it just felt natural. Our family was here today, so sharing a moment like that made it

even better." Their on-court connection, sharpened through years of playing together, helped the university break the game open early. The Owls exploded for 29 first-quarter points, pushing the pace and forcing mistake after mistake from the Lions. By halftime, the Owls led 53-33. The energy carried into the second half, where the university allowed just 25 total points across the final two quarters. Rheyne finished with a career-high 30 points, going 80% from three and shooting with the confidence of a veteran. "I just knew we were supposed to beat them by 60, and I wanted to get there. I knew if I had open threes, I had to hit them," Rheyne said. Taeya added 13 points

and seven rebounds, providing the Owls with physicality inside and extra possessions on both ends. "I just wanted to get every possession we could," Taeya said. "With our posts like Rheyne and Jada, we all focused on owning the glass." The Owls' depth also stood out in the victory. Forward Jada Williams, a graduate, had 14 points, two assists and nine rebounds, while forward Tish Blackwood, a freshman, added six points and four assists despite foul trouble. The Owls forced 38 turnovers, translating them into 22 fast break points and consistent scoring opportunities. Head Coach Kate Lynch said the first half revealed both strengths and the areas the team must tighten. "We got off to a little bit of a rough start, but I think that happens when it's the first game," Lynch said. "Half of our team is new, either freshman or transfer, but I thought we really got it together in the second half." Lynch praised the Steinauer pairing as well. "They grew up together, so they know where each other will be at the exact moment," Lynch said. "They didn't just score; they rebounded and shared the ball." The Owls held Georgian Court to 17 points or fewer in each quarter, one of their internal defensive goals. "Fifteen is too much for us," Lynch said. "We challenge each other to defend every possession." "We definitely can't play passive tomorrow," Rheyne said. "We need to level it up by 100."

Weekly Recap

Football: 4-6 (4-3)

W 52-45 (OT) vs. Post University

Women's basketball: 2-0 (0-0)

W 104-59 vs. Georgian Court University
W 70-56 vs. Mercy University

Guard Jillian Martin, a graduate, had the first double-double of her career against Mercy University, with 12 points and 10 assists. Forward Rheyne Steinauer, a senior, leads the team in points.

Next: 11/19 vs. American International College, 5:30 p.m.
11/23 @ Molloy University, 12 p.m.

Men's basketball 0-2 (0-0)

L 83-76 vs. Post University
L 75-64 @ University of Bridgeport

The team lost both of their games in the Bridgeport Crossover Tournament. Guard Justice Ellison, a graduate, led the team in points in both games.

Next: 11/19 vs. Adelphi University, 7:30 p.m.
11/25 @ American International College, 7:30 p.m.

Volleyball: 15-7 (6-3)

L 3-0 vs. Adelphi University
W 3-1 vs. Saint Anselm College

The Owls earned an NE10 home playoff game for the first time since 2018. They faced Saint Michael's College on Tuesday, Nov. 18.

Next: NE10 Semifinal

Overtime victory for football in finale

By Julian Markese
Sports Editor

The Owls won 52-45 in overtime against Post University after erasing a 28-point deficit. It was the season finale and Senior Day. "I'm so proud of these guys," Head Coach Joe Loth said. "They are the foundation of what we are trying to do moving forward." After trading touchdowns in the first quarter, the Owls muffed a kick-off early in the second, and momentum shifted squarely behind the Eagles. Post scored three unanswered touchdowns. The drives were quick. The Owls defense had no answers. The Eagles scored on drives of two plays, three plays and then finally on a one-play 71-yard touchdown drive that gave them a 42-14 lead. "We started off slow. We've had an issue with starting off slow all year," Loth said. The Owls responded with a one-play drive of their own. Quarterback John Giller, a freshman, found wide receiver Seth Westover, a senior, on a 48-yard strike before the half was over. The halftime score was 42-21. In the second half, the Owls turned to running back Kieran Falzon, a junior. Despite often facing a stacked box, Falzon used

his vision to bounce outside and gallop through the defense throughout the game. Midway through the third quarter, the offense found a little bit of rhythm. Giller completed passes to wide receiver Divine Edwards, a senior, who broke several tackles. At the goal line, Giller faked to Falzon before plunging into the endzone himself to make the score 42-28. The Owls contended with the mobility of Post's quarterbacks all day. Eventually, defensive end Joe Garbowski, a graduate, broke through with a tackle for loss and forced Post to kick a field goal, leaving the score 45-28 heading into the fourth quarter. "We've come back a couple times," Loth said. "We knew that if we could get a couple stops, we could get back into the game." The Owls were in a 17-point hole with only one quarter left. Giller, who had been more of a runner this season, struggled to get the ball downfield in obvious passing scenarios. He threw an interception at the start of the fourth quarter, making way for quarterback Brandon Jorgensen, a senior, to play the rest of the game. Jorgensen moved the offense. He found his favorite target, Westover, for another long touchdown. Westover ran free on the 60-yard score to cut the

lead to 10. "I know my alignment, my assignment. I understand the coverage. I know what they're doing," Westover said. "Then it's just man versus man." Westover finished the day with 164 yards and two touchdowns. He led the team in receiving this season with 679 yards and six touchdowns. He will be returning for one more year. Linebacker LaRawn Robinson, a freshman, had another standout game. He and the rest of the defensive unit held firm in the fourth. Halfway through the fourth, Post was forced to punt. Wide receiver Jaylon Tucker, a graduate, took over the return game in the second half. He held the position for most of the season and was impactful when he got the chance. Tucker broke three tackles on the return and delivered excellent field position. Kicker Daniel Benzi, a junior, nailed a short field goal to shrink the deficit to seven. "Stick to the plan. Nobody needs to be a hero. If we all just do our job, and that's what happened today, we come out on top," Westover said. By then, the momentum had shifted. The crowd, which had been subdued for much of the game, came alive. Needing one more stop, the defense blitzed. Post's

quarterback momentarily evaded the rush before his throw ended up in the dirt. The Owls got another chance. Once again, Tucker flipped field position with his return. Jorgensen calmly led the offense down the field. He found Falzon in the flat, who beat his defender to the edge before leaping and reaching to the pylon for the score. "I love running the ball," Falzon said. "I love being on the field." Falzon's touchdown forced overtime. And in overtime, he needed only one play to find the endzone. He ran left, before reversing field and running 25 yards for his fourth touchdown of the day. Falzon accounted for 231 total yards of offense against Post. He finished his breakout season with 1,227 rushing yards and 13 rushing touchdowns, which led the NE10. "I just do what I can do. There's not much to it," Falzon said. "I just gotta thank my O-line. They block their asses off. And I just work around them." The defense forced Post into a turnover on downs, ending the game. Cornerback TJ Butler, a graduate, broke up the final pass attempt. It was the final collegiate game for Butler, Jorgensen and the rest of the senior class. They were honored with a pregame ceremony and collective

game ball. "These guys brought the team together. Even if the season didn't go the way we wanted it to, they stepped up," Robinson said. "They were leaders. They carried us to this win today." The season may not have ended in glory, but the Owls 4-3 conference record is their best since 2017. With Loth at the helm, the team is on a clear upward trajectory. They completed two comebacks of 17 points or more this season. "This is one of the most productive years I've been a part of," Westover said. "The record is almost the same, but as far as the potential? It's never been bigger." Season Leaders: Passing att cmp yrd td Jorgensen 88 141 1064 5 J. Giller 59 106 806 6 Rushing att yrd avg td K. Falzon 192 266 6.4 13 J. Amaning 39 259 6.6 1 J. Giller 65 235 3.6 5 Receiving rec yrd td S. Westover 40 679 6 D. Edwards 32 553 4 K. Falzon 18 84 1 J. Tucker 8 113 0 More stories: Volleyball beat Saint Anselm College, host quarterfinal For this story, photos and sounds from the game visit thesouthernnews.org