



# SUN BELT CROSS COUNTRY WEEKLY RELEASE AUGUST 29, 2012 • PRESEASON

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## 2012 SUN BELT CONFERENCE CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP

October 27, 2012

Bowling Green, Kentucky

Hosted By: Western Kentucky University

### PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

(As voted on by the Sun Belt Conference's 12 head coaches)

#### MEN

1. Western Kentucky (10 first place votes, 14 points)
2. UALR (1 first place vote, 35 points)
3. Middle Tennessee (1 first place votes, 40 points)
4. South Alabama (60 points)
5. Georgia State (79 points)
6. North Texas (81 points)
7. ULM (85 points)
8. FIU (89 points)
9. Florida Atlantic (106 points)
10. Louisiana-Lafayette (107 points)
11. Arkansas State (109 points)
12. Troy (124 points)

#### WOMEN

1. Western Kentucky (6 first place votes, 23 points)
2. Arkansas State (1 first place vote, 46 points)
3. South Alabama (1 first place vote, 47 points)
4. UALR (2 first place votes, 57 total points)
5. North Texas (2 first place vote, 59 points)
6. Middle Tennessee (67 points)
7. Georgia State (74 points)
8. Florida Atlantic (78 points)
9. FIU (105 points)
10. Louisiana-Lafayette (123 points)
11. Louisiana-Monroe (126 points)
12. Troy (131 points)

## WKU MEN & WOMEN PREDICTED TO REPEAT AS SUN BELT CHAMPIONS

NEW ORLEANS – Western Kentucky University was selected to win the Sun Belt Conference Men's and Women's cross country titles as selected by the leagues 12 head coaches, as announced by the conference office on Wednesday.

WKU's men's team topped the coach's poll with 10 of 12 first place votes for 14 total points. The Hilltoppers return two All-Sun Belt performers off of last year's championship team, including last year's Sun Belt Freshman of the year David Mokone.

Western Kentucky's women's team was predicted to win the Women's cross country title for a seventh consecutive year. The Lady Toppers received seven first place votes for a total of 18 points. WKU will look to a new group of leaders after some key departures off of last year's squad. Senior Vasily Chemweno, a fourth place finisher at last year's Sun Belt Championships, looks to lead a group of underclassmen this season.

On the men's side, UALR came in second with 35 points and received one first place vote as well. Middle Tennessee was selected third with 40 points and received the only other first place vote.

Rounding out the rest of the men's poll was South Alabama in fourth (60 points), followed by new comer Georgia State (79 points), North Texas (81 points), Louisiana-Monroe (85 points), Florida International (89 points), Florida Atlantic (106 points), Louisiana-Lafayette (107 points), Arkansas State (109 points) and Troy (124 points)

In the women's poll, Arkansas State was selected second and received one first place vote for a total of 46 points. Closely behind them was South Alabama with a total of 47 points.

Rounding out the poll was UALR in fourth place (57 points), North Texas (59 points), Middle Tennessee (67 points), Georgia State (74 points), Florida Atlantic (78 points), Florida International (105 points), Louisiana-Lafayette (123 points), Louisiana-Monroe (126 points) and Troy (131 points)

Several Sun Belt teams were also ranked in the Preseason Regional Cross Country ranking by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA). For Men's Division I Middle Tennessee is ranked fourth (South Region), Western Kentucky 10th (South-east Region) and UALR 11th (South Central Region). In the Women's Division I Preseason Regional Rankings Arkansas State is listed as 12th and UALR 14th. Both are located within the South Central Region.

### UPCOMING MEETS

DATE	MEET	LOCATION
August 31, 2012	Belmont-VU Opener <i>(Middle Tennessee, Western Kentucky)</i>	Nashville, Tenn.
August 31, 2012	Florida Gulf Coast Invite <i>(FIU)</i>	Fort Myers, Fla.
August 31, 2012	Clemson Invitational <i>(Georgia State)</i>	Clemson, S.C.
September 1, 2012	Memphis Twilight <i>(Arkansas State &amp; Louisiana-Lafayette)</i>	Memphis, Tenn.
September 1, 2012	Troy Opener <i>(South Alabama &amp; Troy)</i>	Troy, Ala.
September 7, 2012	UALR Invitational <i>(UALR &amp; Arkansas State)</i>	Little Rock, Ark.
September 7, 2012	USF Invitational <i>(Florida Atlantic &amp; FIU)</i>	Tampa, Fla.
September 7, 2012	Auburn Invitational <i>(Troy)</i>	Auburn, Ala.
September 8, 2012	PowerAde Invitational <i>(Middle Tennessee)</i>	Chattanooga, Tenn.
September 8, 2012	GSU Invite <i>(Georgia State)</i>	Hampton, Ga.
September 8, 2012	UTA Season Opener <i>(North Texas)</i>	Arlington, Texas
September 14, 2012	Ragin' Cajuns Invite <i>(Louisiana-Lafayette)</i>	Lafayette, LA
September 15, 2012	UF Invitational <i>(Florida Atlantic)</i>	Gainesville, Fla.
September 15, 2012	Commodore Classic <i>(Georgia State &amp; Middle Tennessee)</i>	Nashville, Tenn.
September 15, 2012	WKU Old Timers Classic <i>(Western Kentucky)</i>	Bowling Green, Ky.
September 15, 2012	Mountain Dew Invitational <i>(FIU)</i>	Gainesville, Fla.
September 15, 2012	Ken Garland Invitational <i>(North Texas)</i>	Denton, Texas
September 15, 2012	Azalea City Classic <i>(South Alabama &amp; Troy)</i>	Mobile, AL
September 22, 2012	West Georgia Invitational <i>(Georgia State)</i>	Carrollton, Ga.
September 22, 2012	UWF Invitational <i>(South Alabama)</i>	Pensacola, Fla.
September 29, 2012	Greater Louisville Classic <i>(UALR, Arkansas State, FIU, Middle Tennessee, South Alabama &amp; Western Kentucky)</i>	Louisville, Ky.
September 29, 2012	Rhodes College Invitational <i>(Arkansas State)</i>	Memphis, Tenn.
September 29, 2012	McNeese Cowboy Stampede <i>(Louisiana-Lafayette)</i>	Lake Charles, LA
September 29, 2012	Cowboy Jamboree <i>(North Texas)</i>	Stillwater, Okla.
October 5, 2012	Jaguar Invitational <i>(Georgia State)</i>	Evans, Ga.
October 5, 2012	Florida State Classic <i>(Troy)</i>	Tallahassee, Fla.
October 6, 2012	Disney World Invitational <i>(Florida Atlantic)</i>	Orlando, Fla.
October 12, 2012	UCF Invitational <i>(Florida Atlantic &amp; FIU)</i>	Orlando, Fla.
October 13, 2012	Chili Pepper Festival <i>(UALR, Arkansas State, Georgia State Louisiana-Lafayette &amp; North Texas)</i>	Fayetteville, Ark.
October 13, 2012	Front Runner Invitational <i>(Middle Tennessee)</i>	Chattanooga, Tenn.
October 13, 2012	Evansville Invitational <i>(Western Kentucky)</i>	Evansville, Ind.
October 13, 2012	Mississippi College Invite <i>(South Alabama)</i>	Jackson, Miss.
October 13, 2012	Coach O Invitational <i>(Troy)</i>	Troy, Ala.
October 20, 2012	Last Chance Meet	Memphis, Tenn.
October 27, 2012	Sun Belt Championships	Bowling Green, Ky.
November 10, 2012	NCAA Regionals	Various locations
November 17, 2012	NCAA Championship	Louisville, Ky.



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### UALR TROJANS



The UALR men's and women's cross country teams enter the season at No. 11 and No. 14, respectively, in the USTFCCA South Central Region

preseason rankings . . . The UALR men return a pair of All-Sun Belt honorees in Felix Maritim and Dustin Mettler in addition to a number of other strong performers from 2011 . . . Maritim and Mettler each earned top-ten finishes at last year's SBC Championships, placing seventh and eighth, respectively, to help lead the Trojans to a second-place overall finish . . . Brian Giken, Markus Pearson and Nathan Carr are also still in the mix for the UALR men . . . That

trio finished just outside the top ten last year in Bowling Green, Ky., placing 11th, 12th and 13th, respectively, to narrowly miss All-SBC honors . . . On the women's side, UALR returns Erika LaCroix, a 2011 All-Sun Belt performer who finished seventh at last year's SBC Championships and picked up the victory at the UALR Invitational . . . Mackenzie Bloom, who placed fourth at last year's UALR Invite, joins Marissa DeLaPaz, who added a seventh-place finish at last year's Arkansas Tech Twilight Run, as two additional returners for the women . . . UALR's 2012 slate features three regular season meets before the Sun Belt Championships on Oct. 27 in Bowling Green, Ky. . . Both the UALR men and women will begin their 2012 season at home with the UALR Invitational at Rebsamen Park on Friday, Sept. 7.

### Florida Atlantic owls



Florida Atlantic returns its top two runners from the men's side for the cross country season. Sophomore

Michael Vidal and senior Ryan Davis lead an experienced group of eight runners back from a year ago. Vidal, from Miami, looks to translate his success from the spring, where he set two school records and was 12 seconds away from another while competing at various outdoor track events. Davis, hailing from Miramar, has been in the top three each of his three seasons with the team, and was the

top FAU finisher (28th place) at last season's SBC Championships. Off the course, he was also named the 2012 SBC Male Sporting Behavior Award winner.

On the women's side, at least experience-wise, the opposite is true. Most of the seasoned runners departed, and 10 "young and dedicated runners with lots of promise," according to head coach Alex Smolka, have joined the squad. The returnees are led by seniors Megan Bary (Jacksonville) and Stacy Paton (Stuart, FL), the latter earning a 30th-place finish at the 2011 Championships. Like Davis, the women's team has also always had a strong showing in the classroom, as the squad earned the highest fall 2011 G.P.A. of all of FAU's athletic teams.

### Louisiana-Lafayette RAGIN CAJUNS



The old adage says that "youth will be served" and that's never

been more true for Ragin' Cajuns cross country than now. After one season with the program, head track/cross country coach Lon Badeaux has made tremendous strides with his first recruiting class and he retooled the UL cross country rosters on both the men's and women's side.

On the men's side, stalwarts Zach France and Willie Allen are back along with sophomores Courtland Privat and Patrick Spiller. Joining them are five freshmen each with carrying impressive credentials. France has been UL's lead runner the past two seasons and is expected to lead the young group this season.

On the women's side, the lone returnee is Genevieve Roy who is a sophomore. Mix in five freshmen and UL women's cross country has undergone a youth movement.

Badeaux's recruiting efforts on the women's side brought it highly regarded athletes like the men's squad. With Roy the lone returning runner, UL is seeking to receive dividends from its talented freshman class to make an improvement on last season's 10th place finish at the Sun Belt meet.

### Arkansas State RED WOLVES



The Arkansas State men's and women's Cross Country teams enter the 2012 season with

high expectations. A strong class returns on the men's side, led by senior Briar Becton who placed in the top-60 at the Sun Belt Conference meet last season. Junior Devin Reed also returns to help anchor the team, while sophomores Brock Westerman and Luke Lindsley will also provide depth and push for the top spots on the squad.

On the women's side, senior Sam Salinas will head a strong group of runners. Salinas finished 14th at the SBC meet in 2011, while junior Rexi Parcels finished 18th. Sophomore Chelsey Roberson will look to improve upon a very strong freshman season, while fellow sophomore Tilda Helgesson will also compete for a top spot on the team.

The Red Wolves open the 2012 season at the Memphis Twilight on Aug. 25, and will compete in six total meets before the SBC Championship in late October. Other meets include the UALR Invite (Sept. 7), Greater Louisville Classic (Sept. 29), the Rhodes College Invitational (Sept. 29) and the Chile Pepper Invitational (Oct. 13).

### FIU PANTHERS



The FIU men's cross country team enters the 2012 season with a very young roster. Among the top runners on the men's side are Manny Garcia, Daniel Puentes and Brandon Ballard. The FIU women's team loses its top runner in Daniela Espino, who graduated, but returns a talented trio. Leading the FIU women's team are Lauren Gonzales, Catherine Ventura and Samia Adan.

FIU cross country coach Andrew Charles expects the two cross country teams to take the next step.

"I'm excited this year for our cross country program," Charles said. "On the the women's side we return all but one as well as add young local talent in Lauren Gonzales. For the men we have strong young team. I look forward to seeing them grow everyday, being led by both Manny Garcia and Daniel Puentes."

### Louisiana-Monroe WARHAWKS



The men's team enter the 2012 season firmly riding the capable shoulders of

senior Daniel Mutai, who has qualified for the NCAA national meet the past two years. Mutai, who finished third at the 2011 Sun Belt Conference Championships, enters the season as a candidate to become ULM's first cross country All-American ever. He will be joined by fellow seniors Silah Chumba and Britt Koestler to create an experienced trio to lead the Warhawks. Chumba, who finished 20th in the Sun Belt last year, is the number two returner for ULM and has the potential to join Mutai as an All-Sun Belt performer. Newcomer Hillary Kirwa, a transfer from Cameron University, could figure into the conference mix as well. Eddie Lewis and Jamel Sams will complete the Warhawk lineup.

The ULM women are led by senior Sharon Sason, who finished 62nd at the Sun Belt Championships a year ago. Sason comes off a solid spring track season and will take the reins from the graduated Denise Meyers. Sason will be joined by sophomores Anakaren Lopez and Bethany Koestler in forming the Warhawk front line this fall. Newcomer Teona Glave is a mid-distance specialist for the ULM track team, and could prove to be dangerous at the longer distance. Danielle O'Donnell will also compete for the Warhawks.

### Middle Tennessee BLUE RAIDERS



Head coach Dean Hayes and the Middle Tennessee cross country teams

are looking to build on last year's success as they kick off the season at the Belmont-VU Opener in Nashville, Tenn., this Friday at 4 p.m.

The men return Nos. 2, 3 and 4 from last season's team that finished third in the Sun Belt Conference Championships. Robinson Simatei (6th), Silas Taiset (14th) and Keith Davis (18th) will play a key in MT's chase for the Sun Belt title. Other runners expected to compete are Daniel Ketter, a native of Kenya, and Alden Dixon, who placed third in the 3,200 and the 1,600 meter runs at the 2012 TSSAA State Championships last season.

"We may not have a true number one like we did with Justus Davis, but I think we are more solid," Hayes said. "In cross country, it's better to be solid all-around than just that one guy."

For the women, 2011 returners are Autumn Gipson, Stephanie Smith, Rachel Islam and Tressanique Hampton. Gipson finished 21st at last year's Sun Belt Championships, while Islam (49th), Smith (66th) and Hampton (68th) helped solidify a sixth-place finish at the conference meet. Lucy Kapkia, who led the Blue Raiders in every race last season, will not run opening weekend but will return later in the season.

### North Texas MEAN GREEN



North Texas coach Sam Burroughs enters his third year at the helm of the Mean Green cross country

program. Results have come quick, Burroughs' first two years at North Texas saw five All-Conference performers in cross country and four new school records on the track. Burroughs also received the Women's Cross Country Coach of the Year Award in 2011.

The Mean Green women's cross country team finished second at the SBC Championships, its highest finish since 2003. North Texas will only have three returning runners this season in Elisha Arends (So.), Carly Griffith (Sr.) and Leesa Morales (So.). The Mean Green women will be adding 12 newcomers including breakout track star, Jo Adams.

The Mean Green men look to improve from their seventh-place finish last season at the SBC Championships. Matt Russ, who will be competing in his last season for North Texas, leads the men. Fellow veterans Brad Fullman (So.) and Austin Yaeger (So.) will be returning as well as the addition of 10 newcomers. The 2012 team marks the largest men's team since 2004.

The Mean Green men look to improve from their seventh-place finish last season at the SBC Championships. Matt Russ, who will be competing in his last season for North Texas, leads the men. Fellow veterans Brad Fullman (So.) and Austin Yaeger (So.) will be returning as well as the addition of 10 newcomers. The 2012 team marks the largest men's team since 2004.

### South Alabama JAGUARS



Led by head coach Mike Barbee, the University of South Alabama Jaguars kick off the 2012 season with a visit to conference rival Troy in the Troy Invitational on Sept. 1.

Two weeks later the Jags host the Azalea City Classic in Mobile Sept. 15. The following week, the team will send a limited roster to compete as individuals at the UWF invitational in Pensacola, Fla. On Sept. 29, the Jaguars head to Louisville, Ky. For the Greater Louisville Classic. The final tune-up before postseason competition will be the Mississippi College Invite on Oct. 13 in Jackson, Miss.

The Jaguar men's team enters the 2012 season with a relatively young squad that has only one upperclassman in junior Alex Shields. Despite the team's youth, the Jaguars return five sophomore runners from the 2011 season—lan Bordelan, Justin Housley, Robert Mann, Derek Westbrook, and Ronny Wilson—each of whom brings valuable experience in NCAA competition. Newcomers Corey Cotter, Patrick Rohr, and Buddy Soto will also be looking to contribute as freshmen.

The women's team will be led by seniors Tori Lawson, Kendra Lowe and Mary Finn. The Jags also have three juniors returning in Leah Hixon, Melissa McCluskey, and transfer Salome Lecoq, as well as sophomore runners Kristin Parry and Shannen Weyer. Alivia Bryars and Meghan Hawkins are the two freshmen who join the squad this season.

### Troy TROJANS



The Troy Trojans boast an eventful 2012 schedule, featuring two home meets, the Troy Invitational and the Coach "O" Invitational. Troy will

travel to Auburn, Ala., to compete in the Auburn Cross Country Invitational and to Tallahassee, Fla., to participate in the Florida State University Invitational, both of which the Trojans have had success in previous years. The Trojans will also travel to Mobile to try their hand at the Azalea City Classic.

Troy is anchored by senior Morgan Paulson for the women and junior Kemper Morton for the men. Paulson finished in the top 50 in every meet of the 2011 season and recorded her personal best in the 5K run at the Sun Belt Conference Championships with a time of 19:47.5. Kemper Morton had his best showing of the 2011 season at the Troy Invitational, where he ran the 5K in 17:11.33.

### Western Kentucky HILLTOPPERS



WKU returns two of four all-Sun Belt Conference cross country finishes from

last year's championship squad. Sophomore David Mokone, 2011's Sun Belt Freshman of the Year, headlines a Hilltopper team looking for back-to-back Sun Belt titles. Mokone finished fourth at the 2011 Sun Belt Conference Cross Country Championships at Keriakes Park in Bowling Green while fellow returnee Kyle

Chettleburgh placed ninth. Senior Joseph Chebet enters his first season running cross country for WKU and is also expected to contribute at a high level after placing 23rd in the 5,000-meter final at the NCAA Outdoor Championships in June.

For the Lady Toppers it'll be a group of new faces trying to capture WKU's seventh straight Sun Belt Conference championship. WKU loses two-time defending Sun Belt champion Marion Kandie and Michelle Finn, who was also an all-conference selection the previous two seasons. Senior Vasily Chemweno, a fourth place finisher at last year's Sun Belt Championships, looks to lead a group of youngsters this season. Jenkins expects big things out of freshmen Louise Hill-Stirling and Lindsey Hinken.

### GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS

The Georgia State cross country teams begin competition in the Sun Belt Conference in 2012 after spending seven years in the Colonial Athletic Association. The Panther women's team placed third in the CAA championship last season, while the men were fourth.

GSU had three All-CAA competitors in Hannah Stefanoff and Katharine Showalter on the women's side and Valentin Poncelet for the men. Stefanoff was also named the conference Rookie of the Year and set a school record with five Runner of the Week awards during the season.

At the NCAA South Regional meet, the GSU women finished 14th and the men were 15th with Poncelet earning All-Region honors. Showalter also contributed an impressive outdoor track and field season by winning the conference in the 3,000m steeplechase and finishing second in the 1,500m.

The women's team starts the 2012 season ranked 14th in the South Region by the USTFCCCA preseason poll. Head Coach Chris England enters his third season at GSU and returns twelve letter-winners from the 2011 roster; nine on the women's side and three for the men. The Panthers host their lone home meet of the season, the GSU Invite, on Saturday, Sept. 8 in Hampton, Ga.