

West Coast Conference Cross Country Championships

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Nov. 2. Crystal Springs, Belmont.

There are four NCAA Division I cross country conferences in California. Two are easy to name: the Pacific-10 and the Big West. Another, the Western Athletic Conference, has only one California school, San Diego State, in its membership.

Can anyone name the fourth? Hint: Six of its eight members come from the Golden State.

If someone said, "West Coast Conference," he must either be a cross-country junkie or a good guesser.

The WCC is known best for its basketball and its soccer. The University of San Francisco was a national powerhouse with players such as Bill Russell and K.C. Jones and Santa Clara was an NCAA co-champion in men's soccer in 1989.

However, only one of its schools, the University of Portland, has a track and field program. For the most part, the rest of the schools are Division III-level programs.

Only Portland and Gonzaga compete as teams in district men's competition. The coaches would like greater emphasis, but the school's aren't willing to put money into the programs.

They are classified as Division I, however, because the schools need to offer a certain amount of Division I sports to meet Division I standards in any. For instance, a school can't have basketball in one division and cross-country in another. They have to be the same across the board, with football the lone exception.

The WCC cross-country championships took place Saturday, Nov. 2, at Crystal Springs in Belmont, CA. The 10-kilometer men's race and five-kilometer women's race were overshadowed by the Pac-10 championships later in the afternoon about 15 miles south at Stanford, but provided interesting competition nonetheless.

Portland's program, built by current Washington University coach Mike Johnson, is in its second year under the guidance of one of

his former runners, Rob Conner.

But Conner has developed the team into what he describes as the school's best men's team ever and the Pilots, ranked 18th in the country, swept the first six places and had all of its seven finish among the top eight.

The victory was Portland's 13th straight WCC title and marked the third time it scored a perfect 15 points. Pete Julian won the individual title in 32:50, leading a Pilot swarm of six that finished within 48 seconds of each other.

Santa Clara's Craig McKinley was the top California finisher, in 10th and Loyola Marymount finished third, behind second-place Gonzaga, and was led by a 13th place by Jose Quinonez.

Portland appeared to win the women's race decisively, but its top runner, freshman Meagan Dockter, accepted water about 200 meters from the finish and was disqualified by an 8-0 vote by the conference coaches.

The disqualification of the race winner brought defending champion St. Mary's, which has cross-country scholarships, back into picture. But when the new scores were tabulated, Portland held off the Gaels, 43-45.

"I assumed it would have cost us the title," Conner said. "But the only person I was disappointed for was Meagan."

The new champion was Loyola Marymount's Regina Marie Eroen, who was competing in only her second year of cross-country.

Eroen, a graduate of Bishop Manogue High in Reno, NV., was sixth with 1,200 meters left, but kicked past four runners down the stretch.

She competed in age-group track and sprinted during her freshman year of high school, but became burnt out by running until deciding to give it another try at Loyola Marymount.

After finishing seventh last year, Eroen, who carries a 3.8 grad-point average, broke a toe and missed five weeks of early-season

running and instead, spent many "boring" hours doing pool workouts. She has arthritic feet and asthma, too, which makes her victory seem all the more remarkable.

"Her victory is a real testament to the rest of the team," LMU associate coach Kevin Galbraith said. "They see that even if you get hurt, you haven't lost out. It takes base training and perseverance."

Overall Results - Men

1. Pete Julian (Portland) 32:50, 2. Ian Solof (Portland) 33:07, 3. Chris Gilbert (Portland) 33:22, 4. Ted Haskell (Portland) 33:22, 5. Bob Webber (Portland) 33:35, 6. Kirk Nichols (Portland) 33:38, 7. Pat Hill (Gonzaga) 34:00, 8. Mike Shafer (Portland) 34:35, 9. Rob Boulds (Gonzaga) 34:55, 10. Craig McKinley (Santa Clara) 35:14.

11. Dan Shepherd (Gonzaga) 35:32, 12. Dave Madril (Gonzaga) 35:35, 13. Jose Quinonez (Loyola Marymount) 36:05, 14. Kevin Vergho (Santa Clara) 36:18, 15. Eric McQuinn (Loyola Marymount) 36:27.

16. Charles LaPorte (Santa Clara) 36:36, 18. Mike Mazza (Loyola Marymount) 37:12, 21. Jon Ferguson (Pepperdine) 37:32, 22. Jeff Erwine (San Diego) 37:34, 23. Scott O'Brien (Loyola Marymount) 37:42, 24. Paul Crotty (Pepperdine) 38:04, 25. Kevin Skahill (Santa Clara) 38:15, 26. Matt Youn (San Diego) 38:36, 27. Alex Espinoza (Loyola Marymount) 38:47, 28. Gabe Vaca (San Diego) 38:58, 29. Erin Burke (Mary's) 38:58, 30. Rod Flores (St. Mary's) 39:04.

Team Scores: 1. Portland 15, 2. Gonzaga 56, 3. Loyola Marymount 96, 4. Santa Clara 102, 5. Pepperdine 147, 6. San Diego 155, 7. San Francisco 195, 8. Saint Mary's 200.

Overall Results - Women

1. Regina Marie Eroen (Loyola Marymount) 19:15, 2. M. Scott (Portland) 19:16, 3. Nicole Karr (Portland) 19:24, 4. pan Melwani (St. Mary's) 19:28, 5. Aimee Tolan (St. Mary's) 19:37, 6. Amy Blackwell (Portland) 19:43, 7. Jen Fritz (Pepperdine) 20:01, 8. Alyson Carr (San Francisco) 20:01, 9. Jill McQuinn (St. Mary's) 20:15, 10. Kerry Engler (St. Mary's) 20:16.

11. Kari McCallum (San Francisco) 20:17, 12. McGarry (Gonzaga) 20:22, 13. Jenny Hosterman (Portland) 20:28, 14. Kathryn Ellingsen (Santa Clara) 20:35, 15. Mor Kleeve (Santa Clara) 20:36.

16. Sheila Logan (Pepperdine) 20:37, 17. Dascha Speltz (St. Mary's) 20:46, 18. Missi Hurlow (St. Mary's) 20:53, Jennifer Troell (St. Mary's) 21:19, 23. Laura Lopez (Santa Clara) 21:27, 24. Terra Thomas (Santa Clara) 21:29, Amy Ledwith (San Diego) 21:38, 26. Cari Loss (Pepperdine) 21:48, 27. Erin Kelly (San Diego) 21:49, 28. Avi Coon (Santa Clara) 21:51, 29. Elsa Sanchez (Loyola Marymount) 21:50, 30. Brigitta Mohlein (San Diego) 21:59.

Team Scores: 1. Portland 43, 2. Saint Mary's 45, 3. Santa Clara 104, 4. Pepperdine 127, 5. Gonzaga 128, 6. Loyola Marymount 145, 7. San Francisco, 8. San Diego 153.