Tradition continues to Nationals

There’s always a certain kind of pressure when each women’s cross country season begins at Macomb Community College. Teams don’t want to be the one that ends the streak of qualifying for the NJCAA Division I National Championships.

That pressure is off for the 2017 squad. The Monarchs finished third with 68 points at the regional meet at Grand Woods Park in Lansing on Oct. 28 to qualify for the National Championships for an eighth straight season.

“No one wants to be that team that breaks the tradition,” assistant coach David Munafò said. “That’s a certain kind of pressure so they’re always coming in, putting in the work and it shows.”

MCC was just 19 points behind Lansing, which was awarded first place, and Vincennes in the overall standings at regionals.

“You look at this year’s team and on paper they’re better than last year,” Munafo said. “Our top girl last year was only running...
Upcoming Events

Men’s Basketball

Nov. 10, vs. Rochester College, 7 pm
Nov. 17, at Mid Michigan, 7 pm
Nov. 21, vs. Jackson, 7 pm
Dec. 2, vs. Muskegon, 7 pm
Dec. 9-10, at Monroe, New York
Dec. 19, vs. Glen Oaks, 7:30 pm

Women’s Basketball

Nov. 8, vs. Concordia College, 5:30 pm
Nov. 10-11, at Lakeland, Ohio
Nov. 14, vs. Wayne State University, 6 pm
Nov. 18, at Mid Michigan, 1 pm
Nov. 21, vs. Jackson, 5:30 pm

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20:15ish and right now we’ve got four girls that are at that time or better. They’ve improved from last year which is what we expected.”

The Monarchs’ top runner all season long has been Macy Gustavus. She finished sixth at the regional meet with a time of 19:29.4, which is 23 seconds faster than she ran on the same course on Oct. 6.

“Macy has really improved this year,” Munafo said. “She’s running more consistently in the mid-19:00s which is kind of where she wants to be. She wants to be a little bit faster, around 19:10, come the National meet.

“Macy has a different mindset this year,” Munafo added. “She had a lot of success in high school and I think she had some injuries last year and that got in her head a little bit. She really got it all straightened out and you have to give her all the credit for that. She figured it out. She’s totally focused. She’s put in the extra work. You can really tell. She’s carrying herself a little bit different this year.”

Morgan Markel took off 14 seconds from her last run on the same course, finishing 11th with a time of 20:08.06.

“Morgan has started to run well at the end of the year,” Munafo said. Megan Cates and Miranda Cates were the Monarchs’ next top finishers coming in 15th (20:14.2) and 17th (20:20.3) respectively.

“They both dropped over 40 seconds from where they normally run,” Munafo said. “They really got it together at this meet.”

Ally Slone (22nd, 20:39.1), Megan O’Hara (27th, 20:48.3) and Ashley Tukes-Karnick (28th, 20:52.4) are the other runners that helped MCC qualify for the meet.

“Ally has been battling through a foot injury and still ran faster than the first time they ran at Lansing,” Munafo said. “Megan and Ashley both improved as well.”

The Monarchs jumped up from 20th to 16th in the latest NJCAA Division I poll.

“We’d like a top 15 finish and that’s very doable,” Munafo said. “Anytime you can put a top 15 we’ll take it.”

The NJCAA Division I National Championships will be run at Lakeside Golf Course in Fort Dodge, Iowa on Nov. 11.
Monarchs end drought

When you bring in the largest and most talented men’s cross country recruiting class in some years it was bound to add up to a successful season.
And that’s just what it did for Macomb Community College. The Monarchs finished third at the regional meet at Grand Woods Park in Lansing on Oct. 28 to qualify for the NJCAA Division I National Championships first the first time in 11 years.
“Our top seven guys are really talented,” assistant coach David Munafo said. “They were all all-county and all-state guys in high school.”
The Monarchs have 16 runners on this year’s squad. They competed with just four runners at regionals last season which is one short of being able to receive a team score.
In past years we were always that one guy short,” Munafo said. “You need that front runner to take the lead and get a top five finish for you. We’ve never really had that in the past.”

Aaron Bachman is that runner for MCC this season. Bachman, who’s a 30-year-old freshman, placed fifth at the regional meet with a time of 25:55.9 over the 8,000 meter course.

“We always had three of four guys in the top 20, but they all were towards the bottom,” Munafo said. “And that always leaves you a little short in the standings.”

The Monarchs had five runners finish in the top 20 at Lansing. Chase Fedolak was the next highest placer coming in seventh with a time of 26:17.8.

Fedolak dropped his time 43 seconds from the last time he ran this course back on Oct. 6.

“He’s one of those guys that gets better as the season goes on,” Munafo said of Fedolak. “We’re excited to see what he can do at the National Meet.

The other placers were Riley Nickell (15th, 26:52.0), Mitch MacDonald (16th, 26:54.3) and Jarred Jolly (18th, 27:01.6), all of which shaved off a large chunk of time from the previous time they ran the course.

“We thought if Riley was going to have a fantastic day he would be around 27:30 and he just blew that out of the water,” Munafo said. “Mitch has been battling through injuries and sickness all year so his times always didn’t look good on paper, but we knew he was in shape to run well and he proved that.”

Jolly took 11 seconds off his previous time at Lansing, but it could have been better had he not lost his shoe on the course after Fedolak accidently stepped on it a half mile into the race.

“He still hung in there and did really well,” Munafo said. “His parents came by and picked up the shoe after he lost it so he couldn’t come around the next lap and pick it up. He’s tough. Had he not have lost his shoe he’d been 30 seconds faster and probably inside the top 10.”

Tom Szymanski (30th, 27:50.6) and Zach MacDonald (32nd, 28:02.6) will also compete at National Championships.

MCC (61) was just eight points behind Lansing (56) for second place overall. Vincennes (36) was first.

“Our main goal this year was to qualify for Nationals,” Munafo said. “We knew it was going to be close with Grand Rapids Community College.”

GRCC (97), which was ranked third in the region all year, came in fourth.

The Monarchs jumped up from 22nd to 12th in the latest NJCAA Division I poll, while Lansing held steady at seventh.

“We are very pleased,” Munafo said. “We just looked at our goals again and had to reevaluate. We almost beat the seventh ranked team in the nation. We’ve proven we’re a top 15 team. We want to beat Lansing, they’re our rival. They’re consistently in the top 10. So we want to go down there and beat Lansing and finish somewhere inside the top 10.

“But with how they’re running of late I honestly wouldn’t be shocked if they finished inside the top seven or top five,” Munafo added.

The NJCAA Division I National Championships will be run at Lakeside Golf Course in Fort Dodge, Iowa on Nov. 11.