
Eastern Michigan University
Women's Cross Country Opens 2014 Campaign in Toledo

Sue Parks’s squad aims high for the upcoming season

YPISILANTI, Mich. (EMUEagles.com) — Eastern Michigan University’s women's cross country team is ready to start off the first of six meets in preparation for the 2014 Mid-American Conference Championship, as they will take on the field at the Toledo Home Opener Friday, Aug. 29, hosted by the University of Toledo at Pearson Metropark in Oregon, Ohio.

The Toledo Home Opener will kick off at 5:45 p.m. with the men’s race, followed by the women. The Eagles will stay in-state on Friday, Sept. 12, when they head to Kalamazoo, Mich. to take on MAC foe Western Michigan at the George Dales Invitational. Another two-week break will follow the scuffle with the Broncos before the team heads to Chestnut Hill, Mass., where Boston College will host the Battle in Beantown Friday, Sept. 26. The Green and White will head to South Bend, Ind. the following week for some staunch competition at the Notre Dame Invitational at 2 p.m. Friday, Oct. 3. After another fortnight free from competition, the Eagles will return to the Hoosier State to run the course at Indiana State, the site of the 2014 NCAA Championship, for the Pre-NCAA Invitational Saturday, Oct. 18 at 11 a.m.

After running the first five meets of the regular season away from home, the Eagles will cap off their pre-conference slate with a home meet by hosting the annual EMU Fall Classic. The Green and White will use the Hudson Mills Metro Park in Dexter, Mich. as its home course Friday, Oct. 24, with the first race beginning at 4 p.m. From there, the
team will take its season-long training to Mount Pleasant, Mich. for the 2014 MAC Championship. The culmination of this year's campaign will take place Saturday, Nov. 1. After the conference meet, the Green and White will head to Madison, Wis. for the NCAA Great Lakes Regional Friday, Nov. 14. Should any members of the team qualify for national competition, they will run one week later at the NCAA National Championship Saturday, Nov. 22, in Terre Haute, Ind.

Head Coach Sue Parks is entering her ninth season at the helm of the Green and White, and has helped the squad make leaps and bounds in MAC and regional standings. Parks moved the Eagles up the ranks of the MAC, most recently taking back-to-back-to-back fifth-place finishes from 2010-12 before taking fourth at last year's MAC Championship, the highest finish since 2000 when the team took third. Parks and her team are looking to repeat the success of the 2000 season on the conference level while also moving up in the NCAA Great Lakes Region after finishing 12th last year.

One of the MAC runners to watch in the 2014 campaign is undoubtedly EMU's Victoria Voronko (Stavropol, Russia-School #42). Voronko made her name known throughout the conference last season as she paced the Eagles in every race she ran, taking two wins and five runner-up finishes in 2013. The Russian product finished second at the 2013 MAC Championship to earn First Team All-MAC honors for the third time in her career and was recognized as the MAC Runner of the Week three times during her junior campaign on Sept. 4, Sept. 18, and Oct. 23. After finishing 14th at the NCAA Great Lakes Regional, Nov. 15, she went on to produce the second-best national finish in EMU history, just missing out on All-American honors with a 45th-place performance in 20:38.00. Going into her final season donning the Green and White, Voronko is coming off an impressive track and field campaign in which she etched her name atop the record books in five different events. Coach Parks is confident in her senior's ability, stating that, "Victoria had a breakthrough junior year and she is looking forward to another season of improvement. She put in a lot of miles this summer in preparation for this fall and is very motivated to improve on her MAC, regional, and national finishes."

A fresh face will also look to make a name for herself in the MAC this season and push her teammates to elevate themselves in the competition. Junior transfer Sofie Gallein (Gits, Belgium-University of Leuven) has proven herself to be a fierce competitor on the track in international competition, taking the Belgian national crown in the 3000m steeplechase last season. Gallein looks to make a smooth transition into the Eagles' squad, starting with the 2014 cross country season. "We're excited to add Sofie to our roster, as she brings a lot of experience to the team," remarked Parks. "Any time you can bring in someone who has competed internationally, it is going to help elevate the entire group."

Another newcomer has received praise from Parks regarding the upcoming season, as Jordann McDermitt (Davison, Mich.-Davison) is riding a strong senior high school season coming on to the Green and White. "Jordann trained very hard this summer and has had some excellent results in a couple of summer road races. I believe that she is ready to come in and make an immediate impact," explained Parks about the incoming all-state honoree.

In addition to Voronko, the Eagles only lost one primary scorer from last year to graduation, as Kayla Pfund finished her career in 2013. The team boasts four returning harriers who scored in either the MAC Championship or the NCAA Great Lakes Regional in Anna Aldrich (Fremont, Ind.-Fremont), Amy Frauhammer (Saline, Mich.-Saline), Taylor Knoll (Warren, Mich.-Mott (Lansing CC)), and Marina Manjon-Rivadulla (Barcelona, Spain-Escola University). With seven total returning runners, the Eagles will also have five more newcomers joining Gallein and McDermitt in the 2014 recruiting class. "We've been trying to improve our depth for a number of years, and having a larger roster can only help make everyone better," explained Parks. "It's exciting to bring in a great group of new athletes; we've had strong front runners for a number of years, but we lacked the necessary depth to get to that next level. We hope to be strong up front and back it up with more depth this season."
Altogether, the 2014 campaign should prove to be an exciting one with the mix of seasoned runners and fresh legs. Coach Parks explained that the Toledo Opener will be an opportunity to get a meet under the team's belt and focus on "competing hard, working together, and seeing where we are at in our training." From there, Parks and her team will make the necessary adjustments and utilize their training meets as efficiently as possible on the road to the MAC Championship in November.