

Golden Bear Cross Country Season Comes to a Close

BY BEN DIERS

With autumn temperatures fading and wintery weather fast approaching, the Golden Bears cross country season has come to a close. In the final two meets of the season, the Golden Bear men finished 5th of 14 and 11th of 27. On the women's side, the Bears finished 9th of 16 at the NSIC Championships and 17th of 32 at the NCAA Central Region Championships.

With their 5th place finish at the NSIC Championships, the Golden Bear men secured their highest placement in the NSIC Championships since 2005 when they finished 4th. In the same meet, the women finished 9th, which was their best team finish since their 5th place finish in 2007. Junior Kara Lindberg finished 27th overall, running a season-best 6k time of 23:29.9 and leading the Golden Bear women. On the men's side, senior Benjamin Allen led the men with an 8k time of 26:19.0 and a 10th place finish, earning All-NSIC First Team honors for the first time in his career. Allen wasn't the only standout for the Bears in that meet as senior Cole Oslin finished 17th with an 8k time of 26:29.8, earning All-NSIC Second Team honors for the first time in his career.

At the Central Region Championships in Joplin, Missouri, the men were led once again by Benjamin Allen. Allen finished with a 10k time of 32:04.2, landing him 44th overall in the meet. As a team, the men finished 11th of 28, tying the program record for best finish at the Central Region Championships, which was set in the 2018 season.

For the women at the region championships, it was junior Lucia Mesfin leading the charge for the Golden Bears with her 6k time of 22:59.1, landing her in 60th place overall in the meet. As a team, the Bears placed 17th out of 32 and set a new program record for the highest team finish at the Central Region Championships. The 17th place finish was four places higher than their placement from the previous season.

As the cross country season draws to a close, the Golden Bears can look back with pride at their accomplishments. The 2019 season was filled with exceptional performances and many new records, both individual and team. With plenty of young and talented runners returning next season, the Golden Bears cross country team is poised for success in the years to come.

Midseason Hot Streak Keeps Playoff Hopes Alive for the Vikings

BY ANDREW WYLIE

The Minnesota Vikings have had a very interesting season so far. The team has a 7-3 record and is well-primed to earn a trip to the playoffs after missing out during the previous season. A major turning point came after a humiliating 16-6 loss to the Chicago Bears that dropped the team to 2-2 and left fans and players alike wondering if this would be another lost season. Kirk Cousins was clearly rattled and played horribly early on. The all-pro wide receiver duo of Adam Theilen and Steffon Diggs took notice. Theilen criticized the game plan afterward, and Diggs ditched practice for a day before giving a cryptic and confusing press-conference.

The point of these grievances was a boiling point for the receivers who are in their prime and were not targeted nearly enough, even though they were wide open on multiple occasions. The message was received, and Kirk Cousins had his finest month of football yet for the Vikings, winning all four games in October and receiving the NFL player of the month award for his efforts.

The Vikings have caught steam again as Offensive Coordinator Kevin Stefanski and assistant coach Gary Kubiak are creating excellent game plans that fit the team's strengths with Mike Zimmer's defense excelling again as expected. The Vikings lone loss since the Bears game came against a very good Kansas City Chiefs team on the road.

One key to both Cousins' and the Vikings' success is the emergence of Dalvin Cook. The running back is fully healthy for the first time in his three seasons and is playing as well as anyone in the league right now. He already has ten touchdowns and has close to 1,000 all-purpose yards. He makes defenders miss regularly and is an adequate blocker and an excellent receiver. Opposing teams must worry about Cook burning them in the run and screen game, which means they cannot pin their ears back and come after Cousins, which is a big reason why he struggled last year and against the Bears this year.

The Vikings have some tough tests coming in their remaining six games, with road games ahead against the Seahawks and Chargers, as well as the always tough divisional games against the Bears, Lions, and Packers.

The Vikings should be able to go at least 4-2 the rest of the way, which would give them an 11-5 record that should easily get them in the playoffs. The Vikings are one of the nine teams in the NFL right now that are realistically contending to make the Super Bowl. The others would be the Patriots, Saints, Packers, Ravens, Seahawks, Texans, Chiefs, and the 49ers.

There is no reason the Vikings, with playmakers on both offense and defense, shouldn't have just as good a chance as any other team. They have been somewhat lucky when it comes to injuries this season, a trend that likely needs to continue to achieve sustained success. The only significant injuries have been to Theilen and star defensive lineman Linval Joseph, both of whom should only miss a few games.

If the team can keep up their momentum and continue to improve, they will have as good a chance as any team to be playing at Super Bowl LIV in Miami on February 2nd.

Gophers Football Remains Undefeated and in Uncharted Territory

BY VICTORIA TURCIOS

The Gopher's Football team is upsetting many, and not just on their home turf. While new seasons always offer promising potential, Minnesota sports fans have been through enough to be nervously optimistic at the start of each new year. Despite the fan sentiment, the Gophers just keep on winning. Ten weeks in, the team's record sits at 9-0 for the first time since 1904. From being the popular pick for the Rose Bowl to making the Associated Press Poll's top 10, the Gophers have exceeded all expectations this season. Fox 9 News reported that TCF Bank Stadium was buzzing with an "electric" atmosphere as the Gophers upset #4 Penn State.

The team has scored 28+ points per game this season, which, according to the Star Tribune, also happens to be a program record. Coach P.J. Fleck also shared with the Star Tribune that a part of the success the team is having is predominantly a result of the trust that he places in the coordinating coaches under his wing. While it is reported that Fleck gives them almost full autonomy on how to run the offense, for example, he is there to offer assistance where it is necessary. "They've earned that," shared Fleck with the Star Tribune. The coaches are not taking all the credit, though, sharing that it truly comes down to the individual players being able to master and execute the plays they are given.

Although pessimism still looms, Minnesotan sports fans are rooting for the Gophers to continue this winning run. The truth is, this is uncharted territory for the team, as the last time the Gophers played in Pasadena was back in 1961. The real question now is, how long can the Gophers keep the streak going? Kare 11 reported that Andy Greder from the Pioneer Press expects the team to continue moving up in the college playoff football rankings, and that if the Gophers keep it up, a playoff win and the Rose Bowl are certainly within reach. The Golden Gophers have gone from underestimated to undefeated and it's all happened very fast.