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USTFCCCA Names NCAA Division III Women's Cross Country Athletes and Coaches of the Year

NEW ORLEANS – Elise Tropiano, a standout runner from Amherst, and Terry Aldrich, the coach of Middlebury's top-ranked women's team, received votes of confidence on the eve of their appearances at this weekend's NCAA Division III Women's Cross Country Championships.

Tropiano and Aldrich are among a select group of those receiving NCAA Division III Cross Country Regional Athlete and Coach of the Year Award from the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association.

The USTFCCCA selects the Division III men's and women's athletes and coaches of the year for eight regions across the country.

Tropiano is the New England Region Women's Athlete of the Year. She won the New England title last weekend, defeating a strong field and improved upon her seventh place finish at the 2007 New England Regional championships.

Aldrich's Panthers are the top-ranked women's team in the nation entering the NCAA meet. Middlebury won the New England Region team championship last weekend, defeating a strong field that included last year's national champion, Amherst. Aldrich's women will be shooting for his fifth national title at Saturday's NCAA Championships in Hanover, Ind.

Each of the regional honorees will either be running or coaching at the NCAA meet.

This year's NCAA Division III regional honorees for the 2008 women's cross country season:

ATLANTIC REGION

Women's athlete: Wendy Pavlus, St. Lawrence University

Pavlus defeated the elements and a field of 218 mud-splattered runners to win the Atlantic Region title on her home course. She added victories in the NYSCTC and Liberty League meets. A sophomore from Tupper Lake, N.Y., Pavlus finished 50th in last year's NCAA Championships.

Women's coach: Mike Howard, St. Lawrence University

After winning their first-ever NYSCTC title, the 17th-ranked Saints qualified for the NCAA Championships as an at-large selection by placing third at the Atlantic Regional. Wendy Pavlus

and Johannah Ludington finished 1-2 at regionals for St. Lawrence, which also won its fifth straight Liberty League championship. This is Howard's 20th year of coaching track and cross country at his alma mater.

CENTRAL REGION

Women's athlete: Marie Borner, Bethel University

Borner qualified for her second NCAA Championships with a 34-second win at the Central Regional. She placed 17th at nationals in 2007. In addition to her regional win, Borner finished first at the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference meet. She is a junior from Cottage Grove, Minn.

Women's coach: Steven Johnson, Wartburg College

Fifth-ranked Wartburg edged Luther 92-95 to win the Central Regional. The Knights also won the Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference meet, winning by 21 points. Johnson is in his 20th season as Wartburg's cross country coach.

GREAT LAKES REGION

Women's athlete: Joanna Johnson, Oberlin College

Johnson remained undefeated with a six-second victory at the Great Lakes Regional. She also finished first at the All-Ohio and North Coast Athletic Conference Championships. Johnson, a sophomore from Chico, Calif., finished 89th at last year's NCAA Division III Cross Country Championships.

Women's coach: Brian Diemer, Calvin College

Calvin is the nation's second-ranked team heading into this weekend's NCAA Championships in Hanover, Ind. The Knights won the Great Lakes Region title by a 42-point margin and also registered victories at the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association and UW-Oshkosh Invitational events.

MIDEAST REGION

Women's athlete: Christa Johnson, Ursinus College

Johnson won seven out of nine races this fall, including the Mideast Regional and Paul Short Invitational races. She is a senior from West Berlin, N.J.

Women's coach: Bobby Van Allen, Johns Hopkins University

The 11th-ranked Blue Jays ran away with the Mideast Region women's title, prevailing by 49 points. Van Allen led Johns Hopkins to the first Centennial Conference team and individual (Laura Paulsen) women's championships in program history. Van Allen is in his 10th season as the head coach.

MIDWEST REGION

Women's athlete: Ayla Mitchell, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

Mitchell improved on her second-place regional finish of 2007 in winning this year's Midwest Region individual title. She won her second straight Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic

Conference championship and will attempt to improve on her 13th-place finish at last year's NCAA meet. Mitchell is a junior from New Richmond, Wisc.

Women's coach: Scott Bradley, Wheaton College (Illinois)

The Thunder won the College Conference of Illinois & Wisconsin championship and received an at-large berth to the NCAA meet after placing fourth at the Midwest Regional. Wheaton's women last competed in the NCAA Championships in 1999. Bradley is completing his seventh season as the head men's and women's cross country at Wheaton. Wheaton is ranked 14th nationally.

NEW ENGLAND REGION

Women's athlete: Elise Tropiano, Amherst College

Moving up six spots from her regional finish a year ago, Tropiano won the New England Regional by covering six kilometers in 21:49. Tropiano's standout season included victories at the NESCAC and Little Three events and a runner-up finish at the New England Championships. Tropiano was a member of Amherst's national championship team last fall. She is a senior from Plainview, N.Y.

Women's coach: Terry Aldrich, Middlebury College

Aldrich guided the fourth-ranked Panthers to a share of the NESCAC title and a 25-point win at the New England Regional. With its regional win, Middlebury moved past Calvin into the top spot in the USTFCCA women's rankings. In his 34 years at Middlebury, Aldrich has won four NCAA women's cross country titles as well as two AIAW skiing championships.

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST REGION

Women's athlete: Taylor Stephens, Rhodes College

Stephens made an immediate impression in her first collegiate season by winning the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference and South/Southeast Region individual titles. She won the regional race by more than 20 seconds and also placed first in the Rhodes Invitational. Stephens is a freshman from Southlake, Texas.

Women's coach: Jenny Breuer, Trinity University (Texas)

With their victory at the South/Southeast Regional, the Tigers qualified for the NCAA Championships for the fourth time in five years. Trinity earlier finished a close second to DePauw at the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference Championships. This is Breuer's ninth season as the head cross country coach at Trinity.

WEST REGION

Women's athlete: Maddie Coffman, Willamette University

Following in the footsteps of former Willamette teammate and three-time NCAA champion Sarah Zerzan, Coffman raced to a six-second victory at the West Regional in Salem, Ore. Coffman also led the Bearcats to the Northwest Conference title with her individual victory. She finished 10th at last year's NCAA Championships. Coffman is a senior from Boise, Idaho.

Women's coach: John Goldhammer, Claremont-McKenna-Scripps Colleges

Claremont-McKenna-Scripps won the West Region women's championship by a single point, 88-89. Goldhammer will be taking the 20th-ranked Athenas to the NCAA Women's Cross Country Championships for the 11th time in his 25 seasons as head coach. CMS also finished second at the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference meet.