

Missoula Sweeps Women's and Men's Titles at Montana Open

University of Montana Golf Course, Missoula – At noon today, a lonely group of nine women set off in the second annual Montana Open cross country meet. Of the nine, seven represented Missoula, and although the other two runners finished first and second, neither counted in team scoring. This, of course, left Missoula victorious with a perfect score of 15 points. Although last year's champions from Billings had not returned today, they did mail the "traveling" trophy back to Missoula for the race, and it was awarded to the Missoula women.

Last fall, team scores were derived from just three runners from each team, but due to requests from several of last year's participants, and the desire to promote this meet as a team-oriented event, it was decided to change to the more traditional method of scoring five runners per team.

Fault for the paltry showing in the women's race belongs to me, the meet director. I have operated under the false assumption that last year's 'Open' was in itself enough advertisement to stimulate excitement that would spread across the state for this competition. I thought that teams would literally fall over one another to line up for this race, and so I failed to promote the races in the manner necessary to ensure their growth, and for that I apologize to the Missoula women's team.

Traci Clinch of Helena, last year's thirteenth place finisher, *did* return this year and she came with a vengeance that left all others far behind. Clinch took control of the race immediately, and with authority, as she sprinted the uphill grade in the first 400 meters of the race. Clinch was never challenged after that, and she finished the 5K in 18:39. Clinch left a very talented runner 33 seconds behind in second place. Second was Jennifer Draughon, originally of Washington state but presently representing Missoula's professional woman's running team, the Mountain West Track Club (MWTC). Missoula's first scoring runner was Lauri Sax (formerly Lauri Adams of Helena) who had also previously represented the MWTC professionally. Sax is currently returning to running after a retirement from the sport.

Today's course was the same length as last year's, and it covered much of the same terrain, but the layout was vastly different, making any valid comparison of times impossible. One new feature of this year's course was the inclusion of three log-jumps placed on the course. Each of the jumps was approximately one half meter in height. That was pretty good entertainment for a runner for only a \$1 entry fee.

Missoula's Robert Sowers also made a victorious return today, after finishing fifth last year. The lanky Sowers has the legs of a thoroughbred, and today he employed his willowy pillars in a hard-nosed strategy of starting strongly, before forcing an even harder pace through the middle and late stages of the race. Sowers' tactic produced a 20 second victory and it helped Missoula's men to retain the team champions' trophy cup. Missoula's team comprised six of the first twelve racers, and they defeated Butte by a score of 29 to 36. Bill Brist of Kalispell held off Butte's Ray Matteson for the second individual place.

- Ray Hunt, Meet Director