

Bobcats Primed For Collegiate Road Nationals

Written by Staff Reports
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The Lees-McRae College cycling team is poised for a repeat performance of last year's success at this weekend's USA Cycling Collegiate Road Nationals in Ogden, Utah, riding a head of steam after running away with the Southeastern Collegiate Cycling Conference Championship on April 22. Led by sophomores Rachel

Warner (Luray, Va.) and Zec Felpel (Willow St., Pa.), Lees-McRae put together an impressive weekend at the SECCC Championships two weeks ago, claiming the individual title in three of the four "A" races. Warner delivered perhaps the performance of the weekend in Saturday's women's "A" road race, dominating the field and running away with the win en route to more than a nine-minute margin of victory.

The Bobcats finished second at Road Nationals last season, taking a narrow lead into the final day before Marian University claimed both criteriums to vault atop the podium. Warner led the way for the Bobcats that weekend, claiming the third spot in the women's individual omnium after placing second in the road race and 14th in the criterium.

Warner and Lehner will likely lead the charge for the Bobcats on the women's side, with Felpel and Joseph Welsh (Cordova, Tenn.) pacing the pack for the men. Felpel has put together a strong sophomore season, heading into Road Nationals on the heels of a conference championship in the criterium, which he hopes to parlay into a national title. Freshman Jake Boone (Hurst, Texas) is also expected to have a big weekend as the Bobcats seek their second road national championship.

"We are ready to get out on the course tomorrow," said head coach Luke Winger, "and certainly excited for what the weekend has in store. The road course like it is going to be a tough and demanding course, with a category five climb toward the end followed by a tough category one climb."

This weekend's participants will face three challenging courses, including a 32-kilometer out-and-back time trial course featuring a mix of rolling terrain and steady climbs. Saturday's criterium will roll through a 1.6-kilometer course in the heart of downtown Ogden, which features eight corners per lap while passing by landmarks such as City Hall Park and the Ogden Amphitheater.

Sunday's road course will likely pose the most difficult challenge for the riders, as the participants will head through demanding 101-kilometer (women) and 125-kilometer (men) courses around Ogden Valley's Pineview Reservoir.

Each race will start with several fast laps around the reservoir before descending into Ogden Canyon and toward the city, where riders will encounter a pair of challenging climbs (category five for 1.5 miles at three percent grade; and category one for four miles at average 7.3 percent grade) near the end of the race. The last several miles of each race will be a heart-pounding descent as riders head back down toward the reservoir and the final finish line of the event.

Lees-McRae will begin its quest for the national title on Friday with the team time trials, which kick off at 9 a.m. MDT (11 a.m. EDT). The Bobcats will then compete in the criterium on Saturday; the women's DI race is set to begin at 2:15 p.m. MDT, followed by the men's DI race at 5:00 p.m. MDT.

Sunday's road races will then decide the individual and team national championships, with the

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women's DI race starting at 8 a.m. MDT, followed by the men's DI race at approximately 12:30 p.m. MDT. Each road race is guaranteed to have a new face atop the podium, as each race is without a returning champion from last year's competition.

Photo Courtesy: Rachel Warner, LMC Athletics