

McVay Leads Tech to Fifth Place Finish at NCAA's Men Pay for Fast Start

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The eighth seeded women's team entered the [NCAA Division III Cross Country Championship](#) ready to put all the issues dealing with injuries to bed and literally put their best foot forward. After finishing a distant third at the regional championship the team knew they would have to do better.

Since the outdoor NCAA Division III Championship in the spring they lost one of their top seven to an ACL tear and surgery, another to compartment syndrome surgery and one more to scar tissue problems. Three more of those that were racing were dealing with injuries that forced a compromise in training. It was just one of those years. The constant theme this year was who was going to step up next because the team is determined to be successful. It is a tradition that is expected every year. Over the past five years the team has placed 10th, 5th, 3rd, 5th and 6th at the NCAA Cross Country Championship.

The course at Hanover College in Indiana was wet from the previous day's rain, and soft from the thousands of runners who had run the course over the past two days. With temperatures in the upper 30's and a brisk wind, the runners were wearing tights on arms and legs and gloves on hands. MIT got out well, putting themselves in a good position to move up throughout the race.

Elaine McVay '15 went out with the leaders, hitting the mile mark at 5:38. The remainder of the team was out between 5:46-5:50, conservative, but smart. At the halfway point in the race the team had moved up to fifth place overall out of the 32 teams, with Johns Hopkins in first, Williams in second, Middlebury in third, and Calvin in fourth. The runners continued to move up through the next mile, taking over fourth place. In the final kilometer the forward movement had stalled and some places were lost. The final tally had Johns Hopkins in first with 85 points, Williams in second with 137 points, Middlebury with 185 and both Chicago and MIT tied with 261 points. A new rule no longer allows ties so the tie was broken in head to head comparisons with runners 1-5. Chicago earned the tie-breaker by topping MIT in the first three comparisons although MIT won the next four comparisons. Nevertheless, a fifth place finish after all that had happened in the past six months was quite remarkable and a testimony to the spirit of the Engineers from MIT. McVay finished in 18th place in 21:47 to earn her second All America honor. Kali Benavides '15 ran an excellent race finishing in 53rd place in 22:14. Louise van den Heuvel '14 continued to make a huge difference, placing 87th in 22:33. Brooke Johnson 'G finished in 94th in 22:35 while Kaitlin Allen '14 closed out the scoring with her 102nd place in 22:38. The 15 places in five seconds shows the incredible quality in this race. Christina Wicker '17 finished in 130th in 22:48. Alexandra Taylor '14 did not have her best day, finishing 195th in 23:19.

The men were definitely ready to show they were better than their rank of 12th in the nation for Division III. They were confident and could not wait for the start of the race. Three were fighting off colds that had their resting heart rates between 10-20 beats above normal, but that did not affect their desire to win. However, despite the knowledge that they could not go out too hard, they did just that, hitting the first 400 meters around 63 seconds with the entire team up in the top group at the first turn. Making the mistake is bad enough, knowing you make the mistake is usually worse because now you start thinking. Once you start thinking, you stop racing. The effort was most definitely there, but the fatigue got the best of them, eliminating the adrenaline edge, causing them to survive instead of race.

Roy Wedge '14 put himself in pretty good position early in the race with the chance to earn All America honors, but was unable to hold on. Matt Deyo '16, tried his sprint to the front one time too many. Between the cold he had been fighting and the soft ground, he had nothing left after being among the top 10 at the mile mark. Rory Beyer '17, right with Deyo and Wedge at the 2K, held on a little longer through 3K and then fell back. Allen Leung '15, also fighting off a cold, could not hold his usual constant pace, falling off by the 2K mark. Ian Tolan '16, starting out much faster than he likes and certainly faster than anyone on the team should have, moved up well through 2K and fought hard for another kilometer, but then faded badly. Captains Benji Xie '15 and Justin Bullock '14, fighting a cold and back injury respectively, died badly after the fast start.

Wedge ended up in 44th place in 25:30. Deyo somehow held on to 78th place in 25:46. Beyer fell back to 150th in 26:13, but had an outstanding season for a freshman. Leung finished 196th in 26:33, but then the wheels fell off the bus as Tolan finished 249th in 27:15, Xie 274th in 28:19 and Bullock 275th in 28:24. The men ended up in 24th place with 541 points, a result of a very poor start and unfortunately not at all a reflection of the talent on the team.

The season ends with the realization that the women lose four of the top seven. It may be a rebuilding year in 2014 unless more continue to step up. For the men, they lose one of their top seven, but that loss is a big one. However, there is a nice stable of rising sophomores and plenty of veteran leadership to bring the team back to the NCAA Championship next year.