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Cross Country Season Delayed

Ben Wiley, Author

Before the start of the fall academic term, the NCAA announced the postponement of the 2020 cross country seasons due to COVID-19. This announcement left many runners uncertain whether they would have a season during the 2020-2021 school year. However, the NCAA approved a plan Sept. 22, that would allow for the cross country regular season to happen from Jan. 30 through March 6, with the championships taking place March 15.

At Seattle University, the athletes on the cross country teams, including Coach Kelly Sullivan, are excited to have an opportunity to compete in the rescheduled season.

“For all of us, we are thrilled to have the opportunity to compete, no matter when or where it is. There was a big push across the country to move cross country into winter and have the championship meet in March. Competing in these circumstances is better than not having a season,” Sullivan said.

Nursing major, Marie Therese Chahrouri, a junior on the women’s cross country team, agreed with her coach’s feelings about being able to compete in the winter. She conveyed her disappointment when she found out that the fall cross country season was cancelled.

“Initially when it was cancelled, I wasn’t surprised, as I kind of saw it coming. It was disappointing and my heart went out to the seniors because it is hard to have the season taken away. Yet, this is an amazing opportunity to have cross country in the winter and it gives us something to work towards in our training” Chahrouri said.

Cross country runners are currently on their sixth week of training for the upcoming season. Of the 67 men and women that make up the team roster, 54 are in Seattle training with their coaches and fellow teammates. Those who are training in Seattle are working out in small groups, wearing masks while training and following other athletic department health and safety protocols.

The 13 athletes have opted to stay home and train by themselves, following individualized plans. Nine of the 13 runners at home are on the cross country team. Coach Sullivan said the entire team has shown a lot of passion for their sport and a high level of focus in their training, even those at home who the coaches don’t see on a daily basis.

Despite some of the team unable to physically train together, Seattle U’s cross country team has still been able to maintain a sense of community during these times. Engineering major, Lance Slichko, a redshirt junior on the men’s team, spoke to how the team has come together during trying times.

“The team has this leadership committee of teammates who are brainstorming ideas to keep us connected while some people are not on campus,” Slichko said. “For instance, we have asked coach Sullivan to send out results from workouts to give the whole team the ability to see where the team is at and how training is going. We are also trying to see if we can do a Halloween pumpkin carving team competition”



There is a chance that the rescheduled cross country season may occur at the same time as the indoor track season in which some cross country runners compete in mid and long-distance races.

“No one knows what is going to happen with indoor track. If we have the opportunity to compete in indoor track, we would figure out a way to balance track and cross country” Sullivan said.

Seattle U was scheduled to host the Western Athletic Conference (WAC) cross country championships in October, but now they will be hosting it at the end of February at Jefferson Golf Course in Seattle.

“I am definitely excited that our school is going to host the WAC championships in the winter. It plays an advantage for us as we don't have to travel or sit on a bus,” Slichko said. “It is also in our backyard so we have run the course before, know what to expect and can focus on running rather than having to worry about extra stuff especially in the era of COVID.”

Coach Sullivan is confident that whenever the season happens, Seattle U's cross country program will be prepared for it.