

THE SOARING EAGLE

FALL SPORTS EDITION

CROSS COUNTRY TAKES STATE TITLE

The 2011 Men's Cross country team has won the **first** state title in Grace history.



The 2011 GRACE boys cross country team stood nervously huddled together. They put their arms around each other, looking for either warmth or comfort. They watched in anticipation, looking towards a podium in their winter hats and coats.

"In 7th place, with 211 points, St. David's," called a man through a microphone. He was counting down all the teams, starting from 18th, the lowest team. Harrison Huntley tapped Coach Charlie Murphy's shoulder and whispered, "Yes!" We had thought St. David's had challenged us in the race. They were one obstacle down.

"In 6th place, with 182 points, Davidson Day," the man again called from an outdoor wooden stage in McAlpine Park, located in Charlotte, and the site of the 2011 NCISAA Cross Country State Championships. In cross country, the less points, the better. Points are based on place. If you finish the race in 9th place, you get 9 points. For each team, the top five runners' points are added up for the team total.

"In 5th place, with 179 points, Fayetteville Christian." A cheer erupted from a nearby section in the crowd gathered around the stage near the finish line of the race. These were the announcements for the race that had finished about a half hour before.

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By: Coach
Huntley

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SOCCER REPEATS AS CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS

By: Patrick Sekel

Some events we will never forget. The Varsity Men's Soccer team will never forget the week of October 9-15: the week of the conference tournament. Our newest coach, **Roman Pibl**, was our fourth coach in four years. After the first week of practice, we knew that **Pibl** was going to challenge us mentally and physically. The Eagles' conference run began in the week before the tournament even began.

Our last two regular season games were against Grace of Sanford and Wayne Christian. Sanford fought us hard for the entire game. But in the end, we lost at home to Sanford, losing the regular season conference title. We took out our frustration at Wayne's senior night two days later, beating them 7-1.



CROSS COUNTRY (CONTINUED)

“In 4th place, with 159 points, Cary Christian.” A cowbell rang in the crowd. We had beaten the Knights in previous races this year, and we were still waiting to be called. Short of some amazing upset, we would be either second or first. But we didn’t want second.

“In 3rd place,” began the man calling the scores. We tensed nervously. Please not GRACE, please not GRACE. “With 132 points,” he continued. “That’s not us,” I whispered to Harrison, who was next to me in our huddle. I was pretty sure we had 70 or 80 points. “Westchester Academy.” A small cheer went up from our section. Ian MacPherson looked up, excited but still nervous. Harrison jumped up and down. Michael Taylor and Alex Provenzano smiled but then looked back up front. Coach Murphy kept his eyes trained on the stage. Maybe he was watching the large wooden trophy sitting on a desk, reading, “Champions” in large print. In my mind, he never even looked at the smaller wooden trophy next to it.

This was the moment we all had waited for. It all started in June, when a few people from last year’s team got together for the first summer run of the year. We started off easy, running a few miles each day. Over the summer, we laid down the foundations for a great season. We trained for longer distances in July and early August. We had epic water balloon fights and fun times. Some new runners joined in, persuaded by other runners to try the sport.

In August and September, races started. We won dual meets. We became faster. We came in second place to NRCA in a meet involving over ten teams, some from schools much larger than GRACE. We learned lessons from devotionals given by Coach Murphy, and we were excited by pep talks from him, talking about a state championship. We fought through injuries and strained through brutal practices.

In October, we had the hardest and most punishing practices yet. We had our last home meet, where we honored our four seniors: Jacob O’Conner, Bob Hauser, and Will Gregory on the boys side of the team, and Emily Howard on the girls side of the team. Time for Conference Championships. The boys won handily, and although the girls did not win, Katarina Pibl dominated, coming in first by a wide margin, as she had in almost every meet up to that point in the year.

After the Conference Championships, we had a two week “break” before the State Championships in Charlotte. The first week featured painful and hard practices, but we were helped on by Coach Murphy and Coach Huntley with their inspiring words.

“You don’t get better in a race,” said Coach Murphy, “you get better in practice.” The second week, we started to taper, having easier practices in order to rest up for the race, so that we would be in peak condition.

We drove down to Charlotte early Friday morning. We set up a tent and huddled around in our jackets trying to stay warm. The girls raced before the boys, and we cheered them on before starting to stretch. Katarina finished 2nd overall, setting a personal record in the process and gaining the title of All-State.

Now, even at the beginning of the season, Coach Murphy had been telling us we could win the State Meet if we practiced hard and ran with heart. Over the course of the fall, we had watched the stats posted on various running websites and seen that we had only one main challenger. That challenger was the defending champion school, Asheville Christian Academy. One website had said that the race would come down to the fight between Asheville’s first runners and our depth. The defending champs had three fast runners, but our fourth and fifth runners were better than theirs. Before the race, Coach Murphy gave the boys a pep talk and encouraged us to run like champions.

In a race like the State Championships, seven people run for each team. (Remember, only the top five for each team count in the points, but the sixth and seventh still take a place and can raise the points of all the runners behind them.) Asheville Christian’s top two runners finished before our first runner, Ian MacPherson. Ian finished 7th, earning All-State for the second year. I was our second runner, and I beat out Asheville’s third runner. Our third, fourth, fifth, and sixth runners (Michael Taylor, Jacob O’Conner, Harrison Huntley, and Bob Hauser, respectively) beat out their fourth runner, proving that our depth was the key to our team. All of those six runners, plus John Jagt, our seventh runner, set personal records in the race.

However, we had no idea if we had won. We didn’t have the official results, and we knew it had been a close race. Some people thought we had won, some thought we had come in 2nd. This leads to the nervous huddle we had in front of the stage as the official results were announced.

“Our 2011 NCISAA boys 2A team runner up, with 93 points,” called the announcer, “Asheville...” That was all he got in before his voice was drowned out by an eruption of cheers from the GRACE cross country team and fans. Coach Murphy threw his arms up into the air and Harrison and Ian turned to each other and started celebrating. Coach joined them, and the whole boys team crowded in as the huddle broke up into a jumping, yelling mosh pit. Asheville Christian went up to receive their medals and the runner-up trophy.



Senior captains Jacob and Bob having some quality bonding time before the race.

A minute later, the announcer called us up as the 2011 State Champions, only six points ahead of Asheville, a small margin in cross country. We posed with our trophy, then the team gathered around Coach Murphy, who had led us with his guidance to this point. We congratulated Asheville, then went back up on stage for more pictures. Coach Huntley marveled, "It's our first ever state title!" The 2011 Boys Cross Country team won the first state championship in school history! It was a perfect ending to an amazing season.

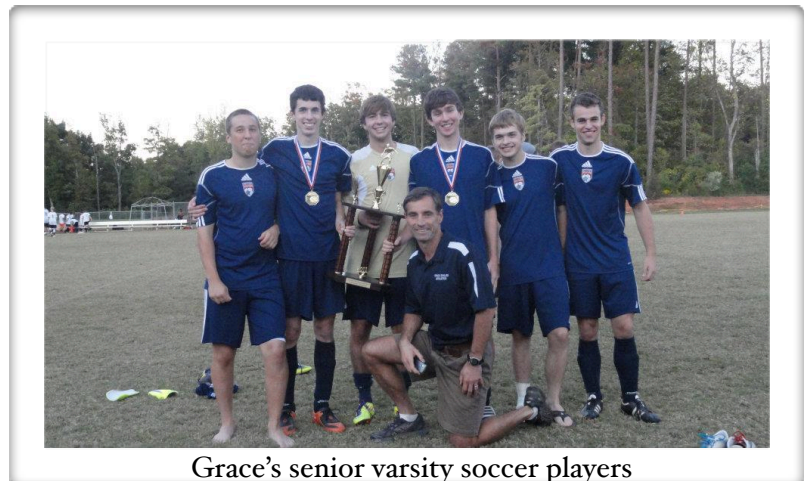
SOCCKER (CONTINUED)

Finally, the conference tournament arrived, and our goal was simple: get to the championship game to face Sanford for revenge. We finished 2nd in the regular season and faced Cresset in the quarterfinals. On a rainy, gloomy day, the Eagles crushed their opponent at home 13-0, showing the conference that we were ready to play.

The Eagle's next opponent was Trinity of Raleigh. After a chip-shot goal that went above senior goalie captain **Steven Dalgetty's** head, took the lead, 1-0. A Trinity player tackled and injured sophomore **Pearson Wynands**, forcing a yellow card on Trinity's goalie and a penalty kick for the Eagles. Junior **Mike Taylor** buried the kick in the bottom corner, tying the game at the half.

During the second half Pearson was okay to play. A save by senior **Josh Snyder** kept the score tied at 1-1. At the end of regulation, So two-10 minute halves were to be played to decide the winner of the game. After the overtime, the game was still tied 1-1. Then, two-5 minute sudden death halves were played; the game remained tied. Finally, it came down to penalty kicks. We won the coin toss and against senior captain **Tanner Bosco's** wishes, shot first.

After eight penalty kicks, sophomore **Dominic Ysidron** buried his, putting the Eagles up 7-6. **Steven** then stepped up into his goalie box and prepared for the next attempt. The Trinity of Raleigh player kicked it to the right side. **Steven** dove to the right and saved it. Game over! Eagles win! The Varsity boys stormed **Steven** and celebrated the



Grace's senior varsity soccer players



Senior Captain Patrick Sekel working hard



SOCCER (CONTINUED)

victory. Surprisingly, **Coach Pibl** was calm the whole time. The Eagles now moved on to the championship game against the number 1 seeded Grace of Sanford Crusaders.

On a windy, sunny, fall afternoon, the two Grace teams took their sides and started the championship game. During the whole first half, Grace of Sanford kept pressuring and pressuring our defense and goalie, but never scored. With five minutes left to go in the first half, it seemed that both teams would go to their benches with no score. But the Eagles said otherwise.

On a clearing ball down the left side, junior **Grant Letchworth** crossed it to the top of the box to junior **Michael Taylor**. He then tapped it to freshman **David McCullen**, who took a one-touch volley shot that went into the back of the net, putting the Eagles up 1-0 with the first half coming to a close.

As the second half started, we had one thing on our minds: DEFEND! Some, if not all, of us said that the second half was the longest half of their lives. When five minutes went by, it felt like twenty minutes had gone by for most of us. But we played our game; the Eagles' defense kept everything out and away from the goal, letting nothing get near **Steven**. Some squeezed by, but **Steven** was ready.

Finally, with 15 minutes to go, the Eagles put everyone on defense except for freshman **Christian Bosco**, whose job was to carry the ball as far away from the Eagles' side of the field as possible.

Ten minutes to go and with a couple of close calls, the Eagles were still winning.

Five minutes to go and the Eagles still lead 1-0 with everyone playing defense. With 50 seconds to go, **Steven** bobbled the ball inside the box, but then fell on it to protect the lead.

Senior captain **Patrick Sekel** shouted "Hold on to that ball Superman!! 50 more seconds and we're champions!!" **Steven** punted it away, and Sanford brought it up for one more final push. The ball was passed to the left side, then passed into the center where it was stolen away by junior **Nolan Lundberg**. He then passed it up to **Mike Taylor** who controlled it with nobody around him. The defensemen looked at the clock: 10...9...8, **Mike** still controlling the ball in the center. 7...6...5. Finally, **Mike** cleared the ball down the field to **Christian Bosco** who kicked it farther away to waste more time.... 4...3.... The Eagle's bench goes nuts! 2...1...0. The Eagles win the championship!!! Grace players storm the field and run towards **Steven**. The Eagles are conference champions for the second year in a row.

BASEBALL



By: Coach Scott Huntley

This fall Grace Baseball tried something new. Wait. Baseball? Fall? Other than the World Series, no one thinks of baseball in the fall. Grace coaches, led by Charlie Murphy with assistance from Chuck Baker and Scott Huntley, participated in a fall league for the first time ever.

Determined to develop skills, twelve team members, from middle and high school, worked together. The schedule was simple: one day of practice and two games per week. "We were able to see how players could handle different positions," Coach Murphy said. "With the loss of several seniors, we needed to see how these young men would step up and assume new roles on the team."

Their results were outstanding. The team achieved a record of 6-2 in the fall schedule. Eagles identified

three new pitchers, solidified both infield and outfield positions, and achieved confidence at the plate.

Coach Murphy also noted, "It's a great thing when these young men put forth the extra effort that allows them to achieve great results."

The new Eagles baseball team will be ready for fans next spring. Although a young team with a solid foundation, they will be an exciting to watch. Participants in GRACE fall baseball were sixth grader Jeremy Fitts, eighth grader Liam Brew, freshmen Alex Dolwick and Conner Usher, sophomores Grant Baker, Josh Carpenter, Steve Getz, Michael Hegar, Harrison Huntley, Gregg Storey, junior Eric Otto, and senior Will Gregory.