



The Flames and Lady Flames ...

BY STATE/COUNTRY

- Alaska (1)**
Sally Volstad
- Delaware (1)**
Rebekah Ricksecker
- Iowa (1)**
Dacia Bushman
- Maryland (1)**
Denise Troyer
- Massachusetts (1)**
Ashley Lundquist
- Michigan (1)**
Jaime Watson
- New Jersey (2)**
Rod'Esther Castor
Mark Hopely
- New York (2)**
Josh Edmonds
Jordan McDougal
- North Carolina (2)**
Katie Albright
Blakely Harris
- Ohio (3)**
Jennifer Klugh
Amanda Moyer
Jake Reed
- Pennsylvania (4)**
Charis Haldeman
Dan Hibbs
Hannah Hunt
Ashley Kline
- Virginia (3)**
Alicia Guridy
Ashley Osborne
Claire Smith
- Wisconsin (1)**
Melissa Martens
- Kenya (3)**
Sam Chelanga
Evans Kigen
Mike Koech

Women's Cross Country Roster

Name	Year	Ht.	Hometown/High School (Previous School)
Katie Albright	So.	5-6	Wake Forest, N.C./Home Schooled
Dacia Bushman	So.	5-6	Castalia, Iowa/Home Schooled
Rod'Esther Castor	So.	5-6	Hamilton, N.J./Steinert HS
Alicia Guridy	Fr.	5-8	Tappahannock, Va./Essex HS
Charis Haldeman	Fr.	5-5	Manheim, Pa./Manheim Central HS
Blakely Harris	R-Fr.	5-8	Shelby, N.C./Grace International School
Hannah Hunt	Fr.	5-8	Sewickley, Pa./Avonworth HS
Ashley Kline	Fr.	5-7	Bellefonte, Pa./Bellefonte Area HS
Jennifer Klugh	Fr.	5-8	Centerburg, Ohio/Highland HS
Ashley Lundquist	Fr.	5-5	Rockland, Mass./Whitman-Hanson HS
Melissa Martens	R-So.	5-2	Baraboo, Wis./Sauk Prairie HS (Wisconsin-Whitewater)
Amanda Moyer	R-Fr.	5-5	Carrollton, Ohio/Carrollton HS
Ashley Osborne	Sr.	5-2	Bristol, Va./John S. Battle HS
Rebekah Ricksecker	Sr.	5-7	Laurel, Del./Sussex Technical HS
Claire Smith	Fr.	5-9	Richmond, Va./Douglas Freeman HS
Denise Troyer	Fr.	5-6	Kennedyville, Md./Red Lion Christian HS
Sally Volstad	Fr.	5-4	Anchorage, Alaska/Anchorage Christian HS
Jaime Watson	R-Jr.	5-6	Ravenna, Mich./Allendale HS

Men's Cross Country Roster

Name	Year	Ht.	Hometown/High School (Previous School)
Sam Chelanga	R-So.	5-7	Nairobi, Kenya/Bartolimo HS (Fairleigh-Dickinson)
Josh Edmonds	Jr.	6-0	Cooperstown, N.Y./Cooperstown Central HS
Dan Hibbs	R-Fr.	6-1	Hatboro, Pa./Hatboro-Horsham HS
Mark Hopely	R-Fr.	5-10	Carney's Point, N.J./Kingsway HS
Evans Kigen*	R-So.	5-8	Eldoret, Kenya/Kuinet HS (NYIT)
Mike Koech	Fr.	5-7	Eldoret, Kenya/Kapngetuny HS
Jordan McDougal	R-Sr.	5-9	Peru, N.Y./Home Schooled
Jake Reed	R-So.	5-11	Marysville, Ohio/Buckeye Valley HS (UNC Wilmington)

* - Completing a year in residence at Liberty

Coaching and Support Staff

Head Coach: Brant Tolsma, 23rd Year (Newark College of Engineering, '71)
Assistant Coach: Heather Zealand, Seventh Year (Liberty, '02)
Graduate Assistant: David Cheromei, Second Year (Virginia Intermont, '07)
Certified Athletic Trainer: Laura Hoskins, First Year (Liberty, '06)

Pronunciation Guide

Sam Chelanga..... Sam Shah-lang-uh
 Evans Kigen..... Evans Keeg-en
 Jennifer Klugh..... Jennifer Clue
 Mike Koech Koh-ETCH
 Jordan McDougal Jordan Mick-doo-el



2008 LIBERTY CROSS COUNTRY

Flames, Lady Flames Harriers Seek Stellar Sequel

In the movie world, sequels almost always fail to live up to the original, especially when key actors have departed the series. However, Liberty Head Men's and Women's Cross Country Coach Brant Tolsma, beginning his 23rd year with the Flames, does not think the movie model applies to his sport. Despite the loss of a few major headliners to graduation, Tolsma believes his squads can follow up arguably the best season in program history with even greater accomplishments in 2008.

Josh McDougal, Jarvis Jelen and Piper Newby led the way for the Liberty men's and women's cross country teams in 2007. McDougal completed an unbeaten senior season with his first NCAA national title, while Jelen recorded a 20th-place finish at the NCAA Southeast Regional Championship, earning all-region honors. Meanwhile, classmate Newby became the Lady Flames' first all-region competitor in six years and broke the school 6K record.

How will 11-time Big South Coach of the Year Tolsma cope with such notable departures? On the men's side, he has the luxury of replacing one All-American with another. Sam Chelanga, who captured a pair of All-America honors as a freshman at Fairleigh-Dickinson before sitting out the 2007-08 Liberty cross country and track & field seasons due to NCAA Division I transfer regulations, is now eligible to compete. After running 13:24 for 5,000 meters and 28:15 for 10,000 meters this past spring, Chelanga appears to be one of the nation's finest collegiate runners, entering the 2008 campaign.

"Despite the graduation of Josh McDougal and Jarvis Jelen, I'm optimistic our men's team can be an even stronger team this year than we had last year," stated Tolsma. "If we stay healthy, we have a great chance at the Big South title. Our big goal remains making it to the NCAA National Championships as a team for the first time in program history."

Despite the graduation of Newby, the Lady Flames feature a quartet of runners—seniors Ashley Osborne and Rebekah Ricksecker and sophomores Katie Albright and Dacia Bushman—who have all placed in the top eight at the Big South Cross Country Championship during their careers.

"As the back-to-back Big South champions, we would certainly like to continue



Sophomores Dacia Bushman (left) and Katie Albright

the streak," explained Tolsma about his women's squad. "We have great experience in the form of our top two seniors and two sophomores. Our unknown is the No. 5 girl. How much of a gap will we have back to our fifth runner?"

Liberty fans will have two chances to see the drama play out before their very eyes, as the Flames and Lady Flames are scheduled to host their first meets in 10 years. The Liberty Big South Preview meet will be contested Sept. 20 on the Campus East intramural fields. Then, the 2008 Big South Men's and Women's Cross Country Championships will come to the same location, on Nov. 1.

"It will be fun to host a couple meets this season," Tolsma observed. "Cross country usually doesn't get much visibility on campus. Also, our runners should benefit by competing on a course they know well and having a good amount of spectators supporting them."

A full 2008 season preview follows.

Women's Team

The 2007 Liberty women's cross country team not only repeated as Big South Conference champion, but also posted its highest-ever finish at the NCAA Southeast Regional Championship, seventh. At the regional meet, the Lady Flames placed five runners in the top 60 and under 21:50 for

the 6K distance. Four of the five (Osborne, Ricksecker, Albright and Bushman) return this season, making the Lady Flames one of only three teams in the region (also Duke and Kentucky) with four top-60 regional finishers back in 2008.

For Osborne, the Liberty track & field record holder with a 16:42 5K, her personal best clocking of 21:44 at the regional meet was among her best efforts during an injury-plagued year. Now healthy, the senior looks to return to the form of her sophomore season, which netted four All-Big South notations between cross country and track & field.

A middle-distance specialist on the track who lowered her 1,500-meter personal best to 4:25 last season, Ricksecker is coming off a breakthrough cross country campaign. She regularly finished as the Lady Flames' No. 3 runner in 2007, and made significant dents in her 5K (18:07) and 6K (21:43) cross country superlatives.

Like Ricksecker, Albright is an 800/1,500-meter track & field competitor who made a smooth transition to cross country. She won her very first collegiate race, competing unattached at the Virginia Tech Invitational. Albright then went on to post an eighth-place finish at the Big South Championship.

Classmate Bushman recorded arguably the finest freshman cross country sea-



son in program history. She came in sixth at the Big South Championship, garnering Liberty's first Big South Freshman of the Year award since 2001. Bushman also shattered the Liberty freshman 6K mark at the regional meet, clocking a 21:39 to finish as the ninth-fastest freshman in the Southeast Region.

As Tolsma stated, the biggest question mark facing the Lady Flames is who will end up as the team's fifth runner. Many possible candidates exist, as the team's roster features 18 athletes. "One positive we have going for us is our depth," said Tolsma. "We're hoping at least one girl will bridge the gap to our top four this season."

Three runners Tolsma mentioned as leading candidates for a top five spot were sophomore Rod'Esther Castor, redshirt sophomore Melissa Martens and freshman Jennifer Klugh.

Castor enjoyed a solid freshman season, which included a 35th-place finish at the Big South Championship. Martens is now eligible to run for the Lady Flames after redshirting last season, following a transfer from Wisconsin-Whitewater. Klugh placed seventh at the Ohio Division II State Cross Country Championship as a high school senior in a 5K time of 18:41, but is coming off ACL surgery.



Redshirt senior Jordan McDougal

Men's Team

The Liberty men's cross country team has chased its stated goal of qualifying as a team for the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championship for several years now. In 2007, the Flames came closer to reaching their lofty objective than ever before, recording a fifth-place showing at the NCAA Southeast Regional Championship. The only four teams to defeat Liberty (Louisville, N.C. State, Virginia and William & Mary) went on to finish in the top 18 at the national meet.

In 2008, Tolsma believes team qualification for the national meet, as well as winning Liberty's fourth consecutive Big South title, remains an attainable goal. The Flames' roster size is much smaller than that of the Lady Flames, but features some proven runners.

Chelanga finished 16th at the 2006 NCAA Cross Country Championship, competing as a freshman for Fairleigh-Dickinson. After a year of training with Josh McDougal, the relative novice at running appears ready to become one of the NCAA's elite distance runners.

A pair of top-40 regional placers return to the fold for the Flames in redshirt senior Jordan McDougal and junior Josh Edmonds. McDougal, a two-time All-Big South cross country runner, came in 16th at last season's NCAA Southeast Regional Championship. The 30:27 10K performance was just shy of earning him an individual berth in the national meet.

Edmonds posted a big 10K personal best at the regional meet, slicing his top time to 31:15 and crossing the line 40th. Like McDougal, he is an experienced runner who has a pair of All-Big South notations to his credit.

Other top candidates for top five positions include redshirt sophomore Jake Reed and freshman Mike Koech. Reed, a transfer from UNC Wilmington, displayed his potential at the 2007 Big South Outdoor Track & Field Championship. At the meet, he ran a personal-best 10K time of 31:05, placing fourth. Koech, a native of Eldoret, Kenya, possesses a significant amount of potential, and Tolsma projects him as a strong Big South Freshman of the Year candidate.

A pair of redshirt freshmen—Dan Hibbs and Mark Hopely—will add depth to the Flames' roster. Hopely posted a 31:55 10K at the Big South Outdoor Track & Field Championships as a freshman, placing eighth. "Additionally, we have a good stable of track & field distance runners available

for cross country, but they may also be red-shirted," noted Tolsma.

2008 Schedule

Tolsma has crafted a small schedule for the 2008 season, hoping to save his runners' legs for the important, end-of-year meets. Only seven races dot the schedule, two of which will be contested on Liberty's campus.

The Flames and Lady Flames will remain in the Commonwealth for the first month of the 2008 campaign. Their first meet will take them to Blacksburg on Sept. 5, for the Virginia Tech Cross Country Relay.

Liberty will return to Lynchburg on Sept. 20 for its first home meet in 10 seasons, the Liberty Big South Preview. A number of conference competitors will battle the Flames and Lady Flames on the 8K men's course and 5K women's course, both of which wind around the Campus East intramural fields and the adjacent wooded area.

On Oct. 3, the men's and women's teams are slated for a trip to Bethlehem, Pa., for the prestigious Brooks Paul Short Run. Liberty will be making its first appearance at the meet since 2004, a competition which saw Josh McDougal notch the first major cross country title of his career.

Liberty will make its annual appearance at the Pre-Nationals, held at the site of the NCAA Cross Country Championships in Terre Haute, Ind., on Oct. 18. This will be a vital race to the Flames' national meet hopes, with at-large points at stake.

Liberty's Campus East will once again be abuzz with activity on Nov. 1, when the Flames and Lady Flames host the Big South Cross Country Championships for the first time in school history. Bolstered by home-course advantage, the Liberty men's and women's squads will aim to sweep the Big South team titles for the third straight year.

The 2008 NCAA Southeast Regional Championships will be hosted by Wake Forest, at Tanglewood Park in Clemmons, N.C., on Nov. 15. The order of finish at the regional meet will determine the team and individual qualifiers to the national meet.

The aforementioned NCAA National Cross Country Championships are scheduled for Nov. 24, at the LaVern Gibson Championship Cross Country Course in Terre Haute, Ind. Chelanga is the lone member of this year's team who possesses previous national meet experience. He hopes to return to the Hoosier State and bring some company along in 2008.