2010 Review

In cross country, it’s not about how you get to the finish line; all that matters is how long it took you to get there.

So it is fitting that while they took different paths along the way, both Muhlenberg cross country teams showed great improvement at the 2010 NCAA Mideast Regional Championships.

With only one senior, the Mule women relied on a roster infused with young talent. And the result was a 13-spot jump to a 12th-place finish in the region.

Muhlenberg’s men’s team, on the other hand, included three seniors and a junior and finished in ninth place at regionals.

For the second year in a row, senior Bobby Torphy earned all-region honors and qualified for the NCAA Championships. He placed 20th at the regional meet and then improved by 23 spots over his finish from last season at nationals.

Torphy also captured the Elite 88 Award for having the highest grade-point average at the championships. He became the first student-athlete ever to capture the award for outstanding academic achievement twice.

Sophomore Samantha Mayden joined Torphy on the all-region squad. She led the Mule women with a 27th-place finish to earn the honor. Freshman Nicole Cronin (36th) and junior William Lowrey (50th) also finished in the top 50 in the women’s and men’s races, respectively.

But the Mules did not just finish strong; they also started fast as well.

At the season-opening Lehigh Invitational the men’s team finished third but was easily the top Division III team at the meet. The Mules also beat one Division I squad thanks in large part to a trio of top-20 finishes from Torphy (seventh, first among Division III runners), sophomore Brendan Smith (12th, third among Division III runners) and freshman Bobby McGetrick (18th). It was the first time Muhlenberg placed three runners in the top 20 at that meet.

The Mules returned to Lehigh a month later for the wet and muddy Paul Short Run. Running on the same course as they did for the Lehigh Invitational, all five Muhlenberg women that ran in both meets improved their times by at least 30 seconds as the Mules finished eighth out of 36 teams. The Mule men finished 16th overall and fourth among Division III teams.

Staying in the Lehigh Valley, both teams earned some hardware and were the top Division III squads at the following week’s DeSales Invitational. The men finished second overall, while the women came in third.

In the final race before the CC Championships, Muhlenberg’s women put together another impressive performance at the Leopard Invitational. All seven Mules posted their best times and finishes of the season, led by Cronin, who finished eighth overall and was the first Division III runner to cross the line.
Both teams ran to sixth-place finishes at the CC Championships with the women placing two runners in the top 20 (Cronin in 17th and Mayden in 19th) for the first time since 1999. While the women were once again led by youth, it was a pair of seniors who paced the men. Torphy posted his best finish at the conference meet crossing the line in 12th place, while Ryan Wilson finished 32nd.

And with a strong corps of underclassmen, the Mule women look to continue to improve next season. And while the men lose some veterans, including their top runner in Torphy, there were plenty of positive signs from the younger runners to give the team plenty of optimism for 2011.