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Locals lead the way at A10 meet

By Matt Stewart Correspondent A pair of local athletes had a major impact in Saturday's Atlantic 10 Conference men's cross country championship in Charlotte, N.C.

La Salle University senior David Hausherr, who graduated from North Middlesex Regional High School in 2008, helped the Explorers capture their first Atlantic 10 title in four years, while fifth-year senior Sean Duncan, a Gardner High Class of 2007 alumnus and also the top runner at the University of Massachusetts, had a top ten individual performance at the championship, hosted by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

"I've definitely been waiting three years to get this championship," Hausherr said. "Every year we go into this meet, from our program's history and tradition, we are expected to be up there, and in my last three years we really haven't taken care of the job. It's nice to finally get it done this year."

Hausherr is typically the second-highest finishing runner on La Salle, but placed fourth on the team at Saturday's meet. He still captured an impressive 13<sup>th</sup> individual finish with a time of 24:59.6 on the 8K course. Hausherr has shown steady improvement at the A10 meet during his four years at La Salle, finishing 52<sup>nd</sup> as a freshman, 26<sup>th</sup> as a sophomore, 17<sup>th</sup> as a junior, and this year breaking into the top 15.

"Today personally for me, it probably wasn't my best race, I didn't really feel good from the start of the race," Hausherr said. "I've been fighting a cold the last week. I ran well enough to help the team, and get us the win, which was the most important part. I'm still happy with how we did. I've improved every year in this meet and I can't be disappointed in that."

Duncan has been UMass' top runner all season long and continued that trend in the A-10 championship as he placed seventh overall, crossing the finish line in 24:44.0.

"I think that the race went pretty well," Duncan said. "I was up in fourth place until the last 1,000 meters, I was just pushing hard and ended up getting passed by a couple of guys, so the competitive side in me is saying 'I was in fourth, I wish I finished in fourth', but I'm pretty pleased with how I ran today."

La Salle ran away with the championship, posting a team score of 39 points. The Explorers took three of the top six places on the day, including junior Alfredo Santana, who won the individual the meet (24:18.0). Following La Salle in a distant second was Duquesne (72 points), which was slightly ahead of third place St. Joseph's (74 points).

"Our finish really speaks to the team's depth," Hausherr said. "It's good to know that if one of our top guys has a little bit of an off-day, the rest of the team will step and take care of the job for them. It's something that we haven't had in the past few years."

UMass (127 points) rounded out the top five in the nine-team conference, just finishing behind fourth place Dayton (119 points).

"Overall it was a pretty good day," Duncan said. "The aim is obviously higher than finishing fifth, but based upon how everyone ran today, it was a pretty good showing. We're a really young team, and I feel that everyone made a step in the right direction. The younger guys are getting more confident to run at that level."

Duncan earned the Atlantic 10 Male Cross Country Performer of the Week Award twice this season, the first time for his performance at the Paul Short Meet at Lehigh, then more recently at the New England Championships, during which he finished 10<sup>th</sup> overall.

"It's was funny for me to receive that honor, because I wasn't expecting it very much," Duncan said. "Then when it happened it was actually pretty cool. I've been seeing some of the names getting that award, never mind getting it two weeks in a row, it's a really cool thing because the guys who were getting that were really cranking and doing some really big things."

La Salle will compete in the NCAA Mid-Atlantic Regional on Nov. 12, followed by the IC4A Championship on Nov. 19.

"We definitely have a good team, we've been working hard all year," Hausherr continued. "We've got a couple more meets coming up and hopefully we'll continue to run well. We got ninth in the regional meet last year and I think we are going to improve on that. We're probably going to try and be in the top four teams, but there are a lot of good teams in our region though."

Hausherr is setting his goals high for his next race, which is the mid-point of the all-important championship slate.

“The goal for the next meet, the Regional meet, is to be my best race of the year,” Hausherr said. “I’d like to be in the top 25, you’re considered all region if you do that, I’ve never done that before but I think I can do that this year.”

UMass will compete in the NCAA Northeast Regional on Saturday Nov. 12, and will join La Salle at the IC4A the following weekend.

“Regionals is just another level of competition,” Duncan said. “There are some national powerhouses like Providence, Iona, Columbia, Syracuse, Brown, there’s just a bunch of good teams, and it’s good for us to get in there. My individual goal is to take whatever opportunity is right there, and run with those top level guys that I’ve been running with for a couple years.”

Duncan and Hausherr have been competing against each other since middle school, and both view it as a friendly rivalry, in which they encourage one another to do well.

“We’re always becoming more competitive with each other, especially since he’s taking more of a leadership role at La Salle,” Duncan said. “He’s a friendly face, he’s in the A10 and I see him a lot. We’re pretty good friends, it’s something to be competing against someone in middle school and then be still doing it seven or eight years later.”

“It’s a friendly rivalry,” Hausherr said. “I always want to see him do well because he’s from the same area as me. He’s kind of a benchmark, where if I beat him or he beats, it gives you a good idea of how you ran.

Former La Salle coach Charles Torpey and the success he had over the years molding star runners is what drew Hausherr to join the Explorers, unfortunately Torpey passed away this summer.

“(Torpey) was a tough competitor and a great coach,” Hausherr said. “It was a little emotional, but everyone on the team wanted to win it for him, and everyone who raced today was recruited by him and raced for him. We were all happy to get one for him.”