



Upset City at Bob Firman Invitational

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Big name individuals and big name teams lined up Saturday at the Bob Firman Invitational with one goal in mind, prove that they can top everyone else. On the boys side, while U.S. ranked North Central (WA) and Trabuco Hills (CA) were the easy favorites, Crater (OR) snuck up for the win, with Foot Locker favorite **Luke Puskedra (Sr., Judge Memorial, UT)** winning the team title. In the girls elite race, Nicole Nielsen (Jr., Borah, ID) pulled off the big upset individually, while Mountain Brook, who came all the way in from Alabama, won by 16 points over Davis, UT, placing their top five in the top twenty-six.

The match up of the weekend took place at the Bob Firman Invitational. Two top ranked teams in the nation, North Central (WA) and Trabuco Hills (CA) went head to head, with many other regionally ranked squads competing as well. Trabuco Hills needed a big seasonal debut from injured Riley Sullivan (Sr.), while North Central's top five needed big efforts.

While those two teams battled early on, a team from Oregon, Crater High School, made some noise as well. With a big finisher up front in senior Ryan Santana, and a strong 2-4, who all ran 16:28-29, Crater pulled off the big upset. As one the best teams in Oregon, Crater beat second place finisher North Central by a mere three points, 121-124. Looking at the results, it was apparent the 3-4 runners of Crater won the meet for them. Trabuco Hills finished a very disappointing eighth place, despite a big finish from senior frontman Scott Blair (5th overall) and Sullivan finishing twenty-second overall. The most exciting team race happened from 3-7, with third place finisher Orem (UT) finishing with 171 points, while seventh place team Central Valley scored 177 points.

Individually, **Luke Puskedra (Sr., Judge Memorial, UT)** reinforced why many are labeling him as a favorite to win Foot Locker Nationals this year. Puskedra started fast and finished fast, running a very impressive mark of 14:49, winning by 36 seconds. Back in the battle for second place, Stephen Clark (Sr., Skyline) outkicked Spencer Gardner (Sr., Springville), while Foot Locker ranked athletes Miles Unterreiner (Sr., Gig Harbor, WA) and Scott Blair (Sr., Trabuco Hills, CA) finished 4-5 respectively.



Traveling from Alabama to Boise, Idaho can not be an easy trip. Flying half way across the country, changing time zones and being in a state that is a bit different from your own isn't an ideal set up to win races in. However, the Mountain Brook (AL) team accomplished so much Saturday. Placing their top five girls in the top 26 spots, Mountain Brook ran away from the competition, taking home the team title over Davis, UT 64-80.

Leading the charge for Mountain Brook, junior Madeline Morgan and freshman Marie Demedicis finished third and fifth overall, giving Mountain Brook the top 1-2 combination of the day with Davis. However, Mountain Brook's 3-5 girls won the race for them. Going 12, 23, 24 in the team points, Mountain Brook outmatched every other team in the 3-5 positions. Strong runners up front, plus a 1:07 spread from 1-5, Mountain Brook showed they are one of the best teams nationally.

While a great team race was taking place, individually a strong foursome of girls were fighting for top billing. Nicole Nielsen (Jr., Boise, ID), **Hailey Knettles (Sr., Judge Memorial, UT)**, Madeline Morgan (Jr., Mountain Brook, AL) and Natalie Hawes (Sr., Davis, UT) each broke 18:30 over the 5k course, with Nielsen pulling away in the final 800m to take home the crown in 18:19. Nielsen's performance surprised some, but running with a mission of winning and wanting to win the title for her school and state kept her focused. Knettles moved up to second, outleaning Morgan at the line, both runners finishing in 18:25. Knettles nearly pulled off the Judge Memorial double, with boys teammate Luke Puskedra winning the boys race. Candace Eddy (Jr., Davis, UT), the early race favorite, finished in fifth.