

Trojan men ready to race at nationals

By Kayla Cornett
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The Colby Community College men's cross country team is ready to compete with its best seven runners at the National Junior College Athletic Association Cross Country Championships on Saturday in Hobbs, N.M.

"We're excited about it," Head Coach James Ortiz said. "I think the guys are ready to redeem themselves after a bad region meet."

At the Kansas Junior College Cross Country Region VI Championships in Garden City, the Trojans had two runners finish in the top 10, but the team as a whole took third place. First place went to Garden City Community College and second went to Johnson County Community College.

Ortiz said his team has a good chance at nationals considering Colby's regional finish.

"I really think we're gonna do fine," he said. "As bad as our region meet was, we barely got beat by Johnson County, now the No. 4 team."

The national rankings for week nine came out Tuesday, and many of the teams competing at nationals, including Colby, are in a different spot.

Garden City was ranked No. 1 last week, but dropped to the No. 2 spot this week. Colby was No. 4 in week eight, but dropped five spots to No. 9 heading into nationals. Johnson County was previously No. 8, but after beating Colby at regionals, they jumped up to the No. 4 spot. Butler Community College was No. 17 and now sits at No. 21, Allen County Commu-

nity College was ranked No. 21 and is now No. 25 and Hutchinson Community College was No. 22 last week, but it dropped out of the top 25 for week 9. The rest of the teams competing are unranked.

Ortiz said he is not too worried about having dropped in the rankings this week.

"Having a bad day and still being in the top 10, I think that says a lot about our team," he said. "We just gotta hope for a normal day. That's the hard thing about junior college, you've got freshmen and sophomores and they have to perform on a national level. You never know what's going to happen."

Still, Ortiz said that as long as the Trojans have a normal day, they will be just fine.

"Hopefully we can bring home some hardware," he said.

Taking it to the mat



KAYLA CORNETT/Colby Free Press
A Colby Middle School wrestler took down a Grant Junior High (Goodland) wrestler Monday at the Colby Grade School gym.

Boxing great Joe Frazier dies after cancer fight

By Dan Gelston and Tim Dahlberg
AP Sports Writers

PHILADELPHIA — Joe Frazier needed the night of his career to knock down "The Greatest."

Frazier knocked Muhammad Ali down in the 15th round and became the first man to beat him in the Fight of the Century at Madison Square Garden in March 1971, the first in a trilogy of bouts that have gone down as boxing's most fabled fights.

"That was the greatest thing that ever happened in my life," Frazier said.

It was his biggest night, one that would never come again.

The relentless, undersized heavyweight ruled the division as champion, then spent a lifetime trying to fight his way out of Ali's shadow.

Frazier, who died Monday night after a brief battle with liver cancer at the age of 67, will forever be associated with Ali. No one in boxing would ever dream of anointing Ali as The Greatest unless he, too, was linked to Smokin' Joe.

"I will always remember Joe with respect and admiration," Ali

said in a statement. "My sympathy goes out to his family and loved ones."

They fought three times, twice in the heart of New York City and once in the morning in a steamy arena in the Thrilla in Manila the Philippines. They went 41 rounds together. Neither gave an inch and both gave it their all.

In their last fight in Manila in 1975, they traded punches with a fervor that seemed unimaginable among heavyweights. Frazier gave almost as good as he got for 14 rounds, then had to be held back by trainer Eddie Futch as he tried to go out for the final round, unable to see.

"Closest thing to dying that I know of," Ali said afterward.

Ali was as merciless with Frazier out of the ring as he was inside it. He called him a gorilla, and mocked him as an Uncle Tom. But he respected him as a fighter, especially after Frazier won a decision to defend his heavyweight title against the then-unbeaten Ali in a fight that was so big Frank Sinatra was shooting pictures at ringside and both fighters earned an astonishing \$2.5 million.

The night at the Garden 40 years

ago remained fresh in Frazier's mind as he talked about his life, career and relationship with Ali a few months before he died.

"I can't go nowhere where it's not mentioned," he told The Associated Press.

Bob Arum, who once promoted Ali, said he was saddened by Frazier's passing.

"He was such an inspirational guy. A decent guy. A man of his word," Arum said. "I'm torn up by Joe dying at this relatively young age. I can't say enough about Joe."

Frazier's death was announced in a statement by his family, who asked to be able to grieve privately and said they would announce "our father's homecoming celebration" as soon as possible.

Manny Pacquiao learned of it shortly after he arrived in Las Vegas for his fight Saturday night with Juan Manuel Marquez. Like Frazier in his prime, Pacquiao has a powerful left hook that he has used in his remarkable run to stardom.

"Boxing lost a great champion, and the sport lost a great ambassador," Pacquiao said.

Don King, who promoted the Thrilla in Manila, was described by a spokesman as too upset to talk about Frazier's death.

Though slowed in his later years and his speech slurred by the toll of punches taken in the ring, Frazier was still active on the autograph circuit in the months before he died. In September he went to Las Vegas, where he signed auto-

graphs in the lobby of the MGM Grand shortly before Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s fight against Victor Ortiz.

An old friend, Gene Kilroy, visited with him and watched Frazier work the crowd.

"He was so nice to everybody," Kilroy said. "He would say to each of them, 'Joe Frazier, sharp as a razor, what's your name?'"

Born in Beaufort, S.C., on Jan. 12, 1944, Frazier took up boxing early after watching weekly fights on the black and white television on his family's small farm. He was a top amateur for several years, and became the only American fighter to win a gold medal in the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo despite fighting in the final bout with an injured left thumb.

"Joe Frazier should be remembered as one of the greatest fighters of all time and a real man," Arum told the AP in a telephone interview Monday night. "He's a guy that stood up for himself. He didn't compromise and always gave 100 percent in the ring. There was never a fight in the ring where Joe didn't give 100 percent."

After turning pro in 1965, Frazier quickly became known for his punching power, stopping his first 11 opponents. Within three years he was fighting world-class opposition and, in 1970, beat Ellis to win the heavyweight title that he would hold for more than two years.



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