

# NCAA DIVISION I CROSS COUNTRY

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## CHAMPIONSHIPS FORMAT IDEA

Cross Country is one of the most widely-sponsored sports in NCAA Division I. It is also the only sport in NCAA Division I that presently does not have any qualification into the preliminary round of the post-season (e.g., Regionals). This idea is presented as one way in which to overcome the challenge of advancing teams to the national championships. This particular format would provide the fairest advancement for teams to the Championships, regardless of their geographic region, while keeping qualifying procedures in line with practices common to all other NCAA Division I sports.

## TEAM QUALIFYING

### QUALIFYING TO THE FIRST ROUND OF THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Teams qualify to compete at the First Round of the National Championships (previously Regional Qualifying).

- Each team that wins an NCAA Division I Cross Country conference championship qualifies into the First Round of the National Championships (currently 31 men's and 31 women's teams)
- An additional 33 at-large teams per gender are selected using a formula based on the team's performance over the course of the season (not historical performance)
- The format could be adjusted to select fewer or greater than 33 at-large teams, to fill the desired team field size.

The complete field of 64 teams in each gender is seeded using the same formula used to determine the at-large team selections. Then, the field is serpentine into two balanced races of 32 teams each per gender.

### QUALIFYING TO THE FINAL ROUND OF THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Teams compete in one of two races of 32 teams per gender at the First Round of the National Championships, held at a single site on the current weekend of Regional Qualifying.

The top 16 teams in each race of the First Round qualify to compete at the Final Round of the National Championships, held on the new National Championships date.

## INDIVIDUAL QUALIFYING

### QUALIFYING TO THE FIRST ROUND OF THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Additionally, individuals also qualify to compete at the First Round of the National Championships (previously Regional Qualifying). This can be accomplished through one of two means, either:

**Option 1:** Each individual that wins an NCAA Division I Cross Country conference championship qualifies into the First Round of the National Championships (current maximum of 31 men's and 31 women's individuals); OR

**Option 2:** The first individual finisher in each conference race NOT on a qualifying team qualifies into the First Round of the National Championships (currently 31 men's and 31 women's individuals)

Individuals in each gender not on qualifying teams are assigned to one of two races using an established procedure. This procedure may follow the procedure used to seed and serpentine teams, or a separate procedure may be established.

### QUALIFYING TO THE FINAL ROUND OF THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Individuals compete in one of two races per gender at the First Round of the National Championships, held at a single site on the current weekend of Regional Qualifying.

The top 16 individuals in each race who are not on a team that qualifies into the Final Round of the National Championships qualify individually into the Final Round of the National Championships. These 16 individuals advancing to the Final Round of the National Championships could have qualified for the First Round of the National Championships either as an individual qualifier or as a team qualifier. The Final Round of the National Championships is held on the new National Championships date.

## QUALIFIERS VERSUS CURRENT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The following are the numbers of qualifiers to the National Championships in a two-round Team Championship format as compared to the numbers of qualifiers to the National Championships under the current system:

### CURRENT SYSTEM (PER GENDER)

	Teams	Athletes	Total
<b>Team Qualifiers</b>	31	7 per team	217
<b>Individual Qualifiers</b>		38	38
<b>Total</b>			255

### TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP (PER GENDER)

#### FIRST ROUND

	Teams	Athletes	Total
<b>Team Qualifiers</b>	64	7 per team	448
<b>Individual Qualifiers</b>		31*	31*
<b>Total</b>			479

#### FINAL ROUND

	Teams	Athletes	Total
<b>Team Qualifiers</b>	32	7 per team	224
<b>Individual Qualifiers</b>		32	32
<b>Total</b>			256

*\*This represents either the maximum number of individual qualifiers under Option 1 or the definite number of individual qualifiers under Option 2.*

## DATA ON INDIVIDUALS

### CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS

In order to provide a clearer picture of the individuals who would qualify into the First Round of the National Championship (formerly Regional Qualifying) under Option 1, we looked at the 2006-10 Division I Cross Country conference championships to see how many individual conference champions were members of conference champion teams (*Individual Champ/Team Champ Same School*). We also looked at how many individual conference champions were on teams that qualified to the National Championships under the current system, assuming that teams who qualify to the current field of 31 are highly likely to qualify to a First Round field of 64 (*Individual Champ on Nat'l At-Large Qualifying Team*). A five-year range was selected due to ease of access to results from conference championships held during this period.

### MEN'S CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS

Year	Individual Champ / Team Champ Same School	Individual Champ on Nat'l At-Large Qualifying Team	Remaining Individual Champs	Conferences
<b>2010</b>	17	3	11	31
<b>2009</b>	17	3	11	31
<b>2008</b>	20	2	9	31
<b>2007</b>	20	3	8	31
<b>2006</b>	18	1	12	31

## WOMEN'S CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS

Year	Individual Champ / Team Champ Same School	Individual Champ on Nat'l At-Large Qualifying Team	Remaining Individual Champs	Conferences
2010	17	2	12	31
2009	14	4	13	31
2008	13	2	16	31
2007	14	4	13	31
2006	16	1	14	31

This data illustrates that if Option 1 was selected, to individually qualify only those student-athletes who won a conference championship, this would have added an average of 10 men's and 14 women's individual student-athletes to the First Round field.

It is important to note that given that the field of 64 teams used at the First Round of the Championships is more than double the field of 31 teams that currently qualify to the National Championships, it is likely that the number of individual conference champions who would qualify without a team would be even lower, as a greater number of individual conference champions would qualify with their teams via the at-large team selections.

## NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIERS

To shed light on the selection of individuals to the Final Round of the National Championships, we looked at how many individuals in the top 40 at the Division I Cross Country National Championships were not members of teams that qualified into the Championships. The "top 40" distinction was selected because the current criterion for attaining All-America status at the National Championships is an individual finish in the top 40 places.

Given that the Final Round field of 32 teams is only slightly larger than the current field of 31 teams selected to the National Championships, this should provide a good picture of how many individuals typically finish in the top 40 at the National Championships.

## INDIVIDUALS IN THE TOP 40 FINISHERS AT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	AVERAGE
Men	5	4	11	13	9	18	11	7	5	6	8.90
Women	7	13	8	12	10	7	10	9	6	8	9.00

Based on this information, the selection of 32 individuals from the First Round to the Final Round of the National Championships seems highly likely to capture the top individuals who do not qualify as members of qualifying teams.