

SOUTHLAND RAIDERS CROSS COUNTRY 2015 SEASON RECAP

LCA Lions Invitational: The Southland Cross Country teams kicked off the 2015 Season on August 22, with the Varsity teams sweeping the Loganville Christian Academy Lions Invitational. The teams competing included the host team Loganville, along with Dominion Christian, Atlanta Girls School, Oak Mountain Academy, Briarwood, Trinity Christian of Sharpsburg, Griffin Christian, John Milledge Academy, Crosspointe Christian Academy, the Howard School, Monsignor Donovan Catholic High School, and the Newroc Rockets Youth Track Club. Wright Calhoun was the overall meet winner in 17:10. Other top finishers for the Raider men were Billy Calcutt 3rd, Brian Miller eighth and Ridge Roland ninth. Stephen Taggart was the fifth man, finishing 18th. The Raiders edged Trinity Christian of Sharpsburg by three points to take the team title. In the women's race, The Lady Raiders dominated the field with five of the top 10 runners. Chris Shattles led the way finishing as the meet runner-up. She was followed closely by Sydney Hayes in fourth, Ryleigh Bell fifth, Calyn Fort sixth, and Paisley Greene 10th. The Lady Raiders defeated second-place Trinity Christian of Sharpsburg by 29 points. The Middle School girls also won, with four runners in the top ten: Jadie Burrell 3rd, Reese Roland 5th, Elizabeth Law 6th and Georgia Torbert 7th. Maddie Crisp, who finished 13th, completed the scoring. The Middle School boys took second place, being edged by Trinity Christian of Sharpsburg by six points. They were led by Gray Torbert, who finished fourth, and Tanner Humphrey, who came in 10th. Conner Cloer 14th, John Henry Crisp 26th, and Will Toms 27th completed the scoring. All four teams then headed to Nash Farm Battlefield in Hampton the next Saturday for the Battle of Atlanta.

Battle of Atlanta: The sun came up on Saturday, August 29 in Hampton revealing schools from all classifications, including schools from Alabama and Florida, ready to participate in the Battle of Atlanta. In the varsity men's race, there were 51 teams who scored as a full team. Southland finished 33rd, trailing GISA opponent Trinity Christian Sharpsburg (27th), and just a handful of points behind AAAAAA Harrison High School. (As the season went, this turned out to be the only GISA loss for the Men's team). Despite missing a key runner from injury, the Raiders finished ahead of some notable programs and schools such as 4-time GISA State Champ Mount de Sales, GHSA AAAAA schools Ola, Woodland of Stockbridge, Dutchtown and Northgate, and AAAA programs such as Eastside, Chamblee, Locust Grove and Henry County. Wright Calhoun led the way with a 17:04, good for 29th in the field of 371 runners. The other men in the Raider top five were Billy Calcutt, Brian Miller, Ridge Roland and Ellis Ivey. The Varsity Women finished 32nd in the field of 44 full teams that scored. The Women defeated GISA opponent Trinity Christian (Sharpsburg) for the second week in a row, as well as Mt de Sales (who was State Champ in its final year in the GISA -- 2013) and a number of notable GHSA big-school programs including AAAAAA Cherokee, AAAAA River Ridge High School, Ola, Dutchtown, and Greenbrier, and AAAA Mary Persons. Southland's Varsity Women competed without number 3 runner Ryleigh Bell (who competed in the Middle School race and finished an impressive 34th) and Number 4 runner Calyn Fort (injury). Chris Shattles led the way with a 21:36, good for 56th in the field of 308 finishers. The other Lady Raiders in the team's top five were Sydney Hayes, Paisley Greene, Lilli Dickens, and Alex Exum.

AT&T Starrs Mill Invitational: Not fully satisfied with how they performed at the Battle of Atlanta, a group of five Southland Varsity Men traveled to Peachtree City on the following Saturday September 5 to compete in the AT&T Starrs Mill Invitational. A late entry into the meet, the Raiders were placed in the championship division with the out-of-state participants in the meet as well as the large public schools. The Raiders knocked off three teams: AAAAA Lagrange High School (whose Sam Bowie won the individual race), AAAAAA Newnan High School, and GISA AAA foe Heritage.

Wright Calhoun turned in a 16:32 to medal in the top 20. Billy Calcutt ran 17:48, Ridge Roland 18:40, Brian Miller 18:52 and recently promoted Freshman Gabe Roland turned in a 23:15.

Darton Dash (Deerfield): All of Southland's teams returned to action at the Darton College Invitational hosted by Deerfield Windsor on a rainy downpour of a morning Saturday morning, September 12 in Albany. This would be the site of the 2015 GISA State Championship on October 31. The competition: Host school Deerfield Windsor and 13 other area teams. All of the teams in GISA Region 3AAA were present, along with Grace Christian, Twiggs Academy, Westfield, Crisp Academy, Pataula Charter School, last year's GISA Mens AA State Champ Mill Springs Academy, GHSA Region 1 AAAA's Thomas County, and Baker County. The men's individual race was a back and forth battle between the GISA's top two runners, Southland's Wright Calhoun and Trinity Dublin's Jacob Mcleod. After swapping leads on the second loop through the muddiest part of the course, Mcleod finally took the lead for good. Southland's varsity men were told that they had won the meet, edging Thomas County Central by two points, with four top 10 finishers: Calhoun (2nd), Billy Calcutt (7th) Brian Miller (8th) and Ridge Roland (10th). The fifth man was Ellis Ivey, followed by Stephen Taggart and Zach Calcutt. Later, the school was told that Thomas County had won by one point and that the computer scoring the meet had crashed during the rain. Regardless, it was an excellent performance and a preview of the State Meet to come. The Varsity Women's individual race was won by Twiggs Academy's Ivy Nobles. In the team competition, Southland's women finished second behind Deerfield and ahead of Thomas County, paced by Sydney Hayes' 7th place finish. Ryleigh Bell was 11th, and the remaining Lady Raiders were Calyn Fort, Paisley Greene, Lilli Dickens and Alex Exum. The middle school girls finished third, led by top-10 finisher Jadie Burrell and followed by Elizabeth Law. Tanner Humphrey was the top middle school boys runner in the final race. After four straight road meets to start the season (Loganville, Hampton, Peachtree City and Albany) the teams took a weekend off for Homecoming before hosting the Southland Academy Raider Invitational on Saturday, September 26 at Southland's campus course.

Southland Academy Invitational: The Southland Men's Cross Country team won first place at the Southland Academy Invitational, defeating second place Deerfield by 42 points. The other teams who participated were Brookwood, Sherwood, Trinity Christian of Dublin, Westfield, Tiftarea, Westwood, Valwood, and Twiggs Academy. The men's race was both a preview of the October 21 region meet and a rematch of last year's State Championship when Southland edged Trinity by three points. Wright Calhoun finished 2nd in the men's individual race in 16:24, behind Trinity's Jacob Mcleod. Billy Calcutt was 5th in 17:35; Brian Miller 6th in 18:22; Ridge Roland 7th in 18:43; and 8th grader Gray Torbert 11th in 19:19. This was Torbert's first-ever Varsity Race. The number six and seven runners were Ellis Ivey and Brody Shattles. Sherwood took third in the team competition, followed by Brookwood. In the Women's race, the Lady Raiders took second, 31 points behind region opponent Deerfield and 18 points ahead of third place Trinity. Freshman Calyn Fort was the top finisher for the Lady Raiders, taking 5th in 21:39; 8th grader Ryleigh Bell was 10th in 22:23; Sydney Hayes 12th in 22:41; Paisley Greene 16th in 23:08; Alex Exum 22nd in 23:42; and Lilli Dickens 23rd in 24:05. Deerfield Senior Virginia Moore won the individual competition. Up next for the varsity runners would be the FSU Invitational in Tallahassee on Saturday, October 3.

Meanwhile, in the middle school division, the girls took third, led by 10th place finisher Jadie Burrell. Betsy Turner was 15th and Reese Roland 18th. The middle school boys finished sixth, led by Tanner Humphrey, who took 13th place and Conner Cloer in 30th. The middle school runners would go on to compete in their Region 3 meet on Wednesday afternoon September 30 at Southland Academy. More than 275 athletes competed in the four divisions.

Wright Calhoun wins FSU Invitational; Middle School Girls win Region:

On Friday, October 2 and Saturday, October 3 the Southland varsity cross country teams competed at the FSU Invitational in Tallahassee. Senior Wright Calhoun outran Ian Reesh of Melbourne High School to win the Men's Varsity A division in 16:24, matching his season-best time. Billy Calcutt was 30th in 17:39; Brian Miller ran 18:19, Ridge Roland 18:26, and Gray Torbert 19:16. The men placed 11th in the 26-team division, one point behind South Walton (FL) High School with a team average of 18:01. Gabe Roland finished in 22:08 and Brody Shattles in 22:14. In the Friday night race, Zach Calcutt ran 22:22, Trent Rundle 23:09 and Harrison Bell 24:47. The Varsity Women turned in their best overall performance of the season at FSU, taking 9th place in their 22 team division. The women averaged 22:42, led by Ryleigh Bell in 22:04 and Calyn Fort right behind in 22:07. Sydney Hayes ran 22:32, Paisley Greene 23:13, Reese Roland 23:33 and Lilli Dickens 23:34. Only 90 seconds separated the six runners for the Lady Raiders.

A few days earlier, the Southland Middle School Cross Country runners had taken to the course at Southland Academy on Wednesday September 30 for the Region 3 AAA Championships. The Middle School Boys team finished as Region Runner-up, 33 points behind Deerfield and 11 points ahead of Westwood and Tiftarea. The Raiders were led by Gray Torbert's second place finish in 12:41 over the two mile course. Nathan Duke finished right behind in third in 12:51. Tanner Humphrey was 13th, Connor Cloer 20th and John Henry Crisp 29th. The number 6 and 7 runners were Will Toms and Matthew Peck. In the Girls Race, the Middle School Lady Raiders won their third consecutive Region Championship, 42 points ahead of Deerfield, with 5 runners in the top 10. Ryleigh Bell was the individual winner second time, covering the 2 mile course in 13:13. Jadie Burrell finished 3rd in 14:25, Elizabeth Law 5th, Reese Roland 8th, and Betsy Scott Turner 9th. The number 6 and 7 runners were Georgia Torbert and Brooke Weisner. The middle school teams went on to compete at State in Dublin on Wednesday, October 7, where the middle school girls took state runner-up honors behind the host team, Trinity Christian School, for the third straight year. Ryleigh Bell led the way with a sixth place finish over the two-mile course, continuing her string of top-ten finishes at the Middle School level. Jadie Burrell took 8th, Elizabeth Law 12th, Reese Roland 13th, Georgia Torbert 27th and Maddie Crisp 28th. In the boys race, Gray Torbert took runner-up honors in 12:29, nine seconds off the winning time. Torbert led the boys to a third-place finish behind Deerfield and Trinity (Sharpsburg). Nathan Duke took 8th (his third straight top-ten finish), Tanner Humphrey 12th, Connor Cloer 20th, John Henry Crisp 47th and Will Toms 50th.

Dr. Weldon Invitational: A few days later, with members of the family of the late Dr. Quint Weldon on hand, the Southland men's and women's cross country teams swept the Dr Weldon Invitational meet at Southland on Saturday, October 10. The Lady Raiders improved upon their previous week's performance at FSU by lowering their team average time to 22:19 and outrunning 2nd place Westfield by 34 points. Americus-Sumter finished third in the Women's race. Freshman Calyn Fort was the individual winner, surging past former GISA AA State Champ, Grace Christian's Perra Harrell, at the 2 mile mark to claim the title in her personal best 21:21. Ryleigh Bell finished third in 21:58, Sydney Hayes fourth in 22:05, Paisley Greene fifth in 22:51, Lilli Dickens seventh in 23:21, and Alex Exum eighth in 23:33. Southland's men won their team competition as well, 35 points ahead of Americus-Sumter. Westfield took third. Wright Calhoun continued to stake his claim as one of the top runners in the GISA, winning the meet with a season best time of 16:14. Southland Junior Billy Calcutt was runner-up in 17:18, followed by a pair of Southland seniors, Brian Miller in 18:05 and Ridge Roland

in 18:45. Gray Torbert took sixth in 19:09, Ellis Ivey ninth and Zach Calcutt 16th. Southland pushed its team average down to 17:54. Americus-Sumter's Heeral McGee was fifth, and his teammates Juan Tovar and John Martinez finished 8th and 10th, respectively. The Southland men have not lost a home meet since finishing as runner-up to Tiftarea in the 2011 Region Championship.

Schley County: Before the Region Championships were held, the Southland teams competed in one more meet: The Southland Cross Country teams traveled to Ellaville on Thursday October 15 to take on GHSA opponents Schley County, Marion County, Chattahoochee County and Americus-Sumter. The Lady Raiders won their race with a perfect score of 15, taking the first six overall places. Ryleigh Bell won with a 21:55, followed by Calyn Fort, Sydney Hayes, Lilli Dickens, Alex Exum and Paisley Greene. Simran Sethi from Americus- Sumter finished seventh to pace her team to a third place finish. Marion finished second. The Southland Men won with a near-perfect 18 points, taking six of the top ten places. Wright Calhoun won overall in 16:23, followed by Billy Calcutt (2nd) and Ridge Roland (3rd). Brian Miller took fifth, Gray Torbert 7th, and Zach Calcutt 10th. Heeral McGee of Americus-Sumter finished fourth, leading his team to a second place finish. Crisp County was third.

Next up for the Raiders: the Region 3AAA Meet at Southland's campus on Wednesday October 21.

Region 3AAA Meet: By the time the sun went down on that day, the Southland Raiders Men's Cross Country team had won its fourth consecutive Region Championship on the Raiders' home course. Senior Wright Calhoun won his fourth straight individual championship, crossing the finish line in 16:19. Junior Billy Calcutt took runner-up honors for the third straight year in a personal- best 17:09, edging Deerfield's top runner, Ethan Merritt, at the finish line. Senior Ridge Roland took 4th in 18:26, Senior Brian Miller was 7th. Eighth Grader Gray Torbert was the fifth man, taking 14th, followed by Sophomore Zach Calcutt in 19th and Senior Ellis Ivey in 20th. Southland won with a low score of 28, with Deerfield as runner-up with 49 points, followed by Brookwood (63) and Tiftarea (85). Westwood did not have sufficient runners to score as a team.

The Lady Raiders finished as region runner-up behind Deerfield. The scoring went: Deerfield 20, Southland 39, Brookwood 86 and Tiftarea 96. Westwood did not have sufficient runners to score as a team. Deerfield senior Virginia Moore was the overall winner, followed by her teammate, Camryn Bridges. Southland Sophomore Sydney Hayes took third in a season-best 21:39, Freshman Calyn Fort was 6th in 21:44, and Eighth Grader Ryleigh Bell finished 9th in a season-best 21:50. Sophomore Alex Exum was 12th, Sophomore Lilli Dickens was 13th, and Junior Paisley Greene was 14th. By virtue of their top-ten finishes, Wright Calhoun, Billy Calcutt, Ridge Roland and Brian Miller were named to the men's All-Region team, and Sydney Hayes, Calyn Fort and Ryleigh Bell to the women's team. This is the fourth consecutive All-Region selection for Calhoun, Calcutt, and Miller, and the third for Hayes.

The teams then prepared to travel to Darton State College on Saturday October 31 to compete in the GISA State Championships. Region 3AAA Meet recap. Looking back five seasons, the Southland Men and Women have finished either first or second in Region each season-- the only Region program to place both teams in the top two each of the past five years.

GISA State Championships: The Southland Men's Cross Country Team traveled to Albany on Saturday October 31 and took home its third straight GISA AAA State Championship. Senior Wright Calhoun led the way with a state runner-up finish after a wire-to-wire battle with Trinity's Jacob

McLeod. Calhoun turned in a 15:54.69 over the 5k course, two seconds behind McLeod, breaking his own school record one final time. Junior Billy Calcutt ran to a personal-best 16:40 and finished fourth, with Senior Ridge Roland taking eighth in 17:21, Senior Team Captain Brian Miller 14th in 18:13, and fifth man, eighth grader Gray Torbert, finishing 26th in his personal-best 18:48. Senior Ellis Ivey was 54th and Sophomore Zach Calcutt 59th. After close wins over Augusta Prep and Heritage in 2013 and Trinity of Dublin past year, the Raiders' latest challenge was the only GISA team to beat it this season -- Trinity Christian of Sharpsburg at the Battle of Atlanta. When the results went up on the board, Southland was the winner by 30 points over Sharpsburg, and Augusta Prep was third. Southland lowered its team average to 17:23 -- more than 10 seconds quicker than last year's championship team. Calhoun and Billy Calcutt were named to the All-State Team for the fourth straight year and Roland for the second straight time.

In the Women's race, Deerfield's girls were solidly in first with its 1-2 duo of Virginia Moore and Camryn Bridges, leaving the Lady Raiders in a three-way battle for the runner-up spot with last year's champ, Westminster of Augusta, and Atlanta's Holy Spirit Prep. The Lady Raiders took third with 127 points, 20 points behind runner-up Westminster and two points ahead of fourth-place Holy Spirit. The third place finish is the highest ever for the Southland Women's Team. The Women lowered their team average to a record 21:46. Eighth grader Ryleigh Bell was the team's top finisher in 13th, turning in a personal-best 21:07. Freshman Calyn Fort was 22nd in 21:23, Sophomore Team Co-Captain Sydney Hayes 28th in 21:47; Sophomore Alex Exum 29th in 21:59, Junior Paisley Greene 40th in 22:35 and Sophomore Lilli Dickens in 57th.

The State Meet capped off a record year for the cross country program, with all four teams -- men's and women's, varsity and middle school -- finishing in the top three at state.

Wright Calhoun and Billy Calcutt picked up post-season awards. Both were named to the "South of the Border" All-Star Team by Georgia Milesplit on November 18, 2015. Georgia Milesplit is the premier news and statistical clearinghouse for Georgia high school and college track and field and cross country. The "South of the Border" team honors the top cross country athletes from the 84 counties comprising South and Central Georgia, including Columbus, Macon, Savannah, Albany and Valdosta. There were 8 runners named to the First Team, 8 to the Second Team and 10 Honorable Mentions. Senior Wright Calhoun, was named to the First Team. Calhoun and Calcutt were two of only three GISA runners named to the men's teams.

The 2015 teams were coached by Patrick Calcutt and Angie Bell, with Special Team Assistants Chad Bell, Charlene Pennymon and Bruce Skiles. Carol Burrell assisted with the Summer Running program and with the summer camp at Rock Eagle.

The home meets were facilitated by numerous cross country families, led by the Calhouns (course set-up and maintenance and finish clock), Shattles and Roland (starting and timing), Blankenship and Torbert (computerized results), Greene (concessions), Fort and Hayes (course set-up) and many others.

The Team Captains were Brian Miller (Varsity Men), Chris Shattles and Sydney Hayes (Varsity Women), Tanner Humphrey (Middle School Boys) and Reese Roland (Middle School Girls).

Numerous athletes doubled up to compete in other sports during cross country season. The majority

of the Middle School Boys runners also played either C-Team or 5th-6th Football. Four of the thirteen Varsity Men also played Football, and one more played two different instruments for the Raider Band. The Middle School Girls team included soccer and softball players, and the Varsity Women also included a member of the Raider Band and a participant in the One-Act Play.

Varsity Program Highlights for 2015 (updated and corrected):

- * **Men AAA State Champions for third consecutive year**
- * **Men win Region fourth consecutive year**
- * **Wright Calhoun and Billy Calcutt make All-State for fourth consecutive year**
- * **Ridge Roland makes All-State Men's team second consecutive year**
- * **Wright Calhoun sets new Men 5k school record 15:54.69**
- * **Four Men make All-Region team: Wright Calhoun, Billy Calcutt, Brian Miller (all four-time selections) and Ridge Roland (second time selected)**
- * **Three Women make All-Region team: Sydney Hayes (three time selection), Calyn Fort (second time selected), Ryleigh Bell**
- * **Men undefeated against Region opponents, fourth consecutive year**
- * **Men undefeated at home, fourth consecutive year**
- * **Fastest Men's team average time 1-5 in school history (17:23), third-fastest all time in GISA AAA Championship History**
- * **Fastest Women's team average time 1-5 in school history (21:46)**
- * **Wright Calhoun and Billy Calcutt named to the Georgia Milesplit "South of the Border" Team**
- * **Wright Calhoun signs letter of intent to run cross country**

Middle School Program Highlights for 2015:

- * **Middle School Girls win Region, third consecutive year**
- * **Middle School Girls State Runner-up, third consecutive year**
- * **Middle School Boys Third at State, highest finish ever**
- * **Top ten finishers at State: Girls: Ryleigh Bell and Jadie Burrell, and Boys: Gray Torbert and Nathan Duke.**