

Fully recovered and ready to go

Local runner hopes to win Dellenger Invitational



Geoff Crimmins/Daily News

Idaho cross-country runner Emily Paradis, front, runs during a practice in Moscow on Wednesday.

By Ben Handel, Daily News staff

After her health took a sharp turn for the worse last year, Idaho cross country star Emily Paradis has had to live by two simple words - patience and perseverance.

"I really struggled with it a lot. It wasn't just a physical barrier, it was mental, too," Paradis said.

Entering her sophomore year, the former Moscow Bear was one of the promising young runners who had helped Idaho win the 2010 Western Athletic Conference cross country championship. She didn't disappoint in her follow-up campaign, as her strong performance helped the team win the WAC championship once again. But before she could run indoor or outdoor track, she started feeling ill.

"I started feeling light-headed when I was running. I would just feel really fatigued," Paradis said. "I wasn't myself."

Paradis knew something wasn't right and sought medical help.

"We had bloodwork done and I was very low on my ferritin," she said. "By the time indoor track started it was so bad that even though I was already taking iron supplements, I had to triple my intake."

Wayne Phipps, Idaho director of cross country/track and field, said the news was a crushing blow to Paradis and the start of a string of bad luck for her.

"It was a big disappointment for her because she had had a great cross country season and was looking forward to track," Phipps said. "It seemed like it was one thing after another. It started with anemia and that led to some other sicknesses and some minor injuries here and there and she had to miss indoor and outdoor track completely."

Never one to give in, Paradis worked hard to regain her full strength and live up to her promising potential.

"This year I have been really staying on top of my supplements and taking care of my body so I can do the training," Paradis said. "It has still been rough, but I am a lot better than I was last year. Over the summer I really had to recover mentally when I was doing my high mileage workouts and I am still trying to get back into the competitive mindset and working on that racing mentality."

Paradis said her coach had a huge role in helping her recover.

"If you are having a rough day, he'll adjust your workout to the point that you're still getting what you need but your body can handle it," Paradis said. "He's very understanding and has really helped me through my struggles."

Teammate Holly Browning said Paradis' presence inspires and helps everyone else focus.

"Whenever she's hurting, she always pushes so hard, and I can't do that," Browning said. "When she has an injury or hasn't eaten or slept because she's had a busy day, she still pushes through it."

No matter what is troubling her, Paradis keeps a smile on her face and a helping hand ready. Browning said her cheerfulness is something that she looks forward to seeing every day.

"Emily always makes everything fun, all the workouts and practices and everything else," Browning said. "I love her because we really have the same mindset and she keeps me company during workouts and helps the time go by."

As a coach, Phipps appreciates that attitude Paradis brings to practice every day - even if sometimes she isn't feeling up to it.

"She does a good job of faking it, of not letting other people see that it's bothering her," Phipp said. "I know it was very frustrating for her and now that everything is behind her you can definitely see the difference of her being truly happy and her faking it."

Coming from a family of runners, Paradis said she doesn't think quitting is in her genes. In her only meet so far this year, she didn't perform as well as she felt she should have, finishing in the middle of the pack. However, Phipps is confident she will rebound this weekend at the Dellenger Invitational.

"I think we're going to see all her hard work pay off," he said. "I think she's going to have a great race at the Dellenger meet, and I think that is going to carry on throughout the rest of the year."

Paradis said she knows how important the race is - not only to the team but also to her own personal success.

"All the smoke in the air was bothering my asthma a bit and I was feeling under the weather for the last meet, but I feel much better now," she said. "But being able to compete again was a huge confidence boost and really was a big step for me. As long as I can keep my breathing under control I should do fine."

If anyone can take on anemia, asthma and the flu-bug all at once, it's Paradis.

"Work ethic is her No. 1 weapon," Phipp said. "She always wants to know what she can do to get better and no matter what kind of workout I give her, she's more than willing to tackle it. She's very motivated, very dedicated. ... Last year she established herself as one of the best runners in the conference and I think we'll see that again this year."

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