



25th Anniversary: Annual Mud Mountain Race For Edwardsville Cross Country And Track Teams Returns Saturday

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Mud Mountain 5K race, the biggest fund-raising event for both the Edwardsville High School cross country and track teams, returns on Saturday for the event's 25th-anniversary celebration at the famed Mud Mountain cross country course at SIU-Edwardsville.

Last year's event was a virtual run, with the actual event being canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which makes this year's event even more special.

"I'm excited that we get to race in person," said Tigers' cross country head coach George Patrylak. "SIUE gave us the green light a few months ago, and we've been working hard to get everything in place."

The event also serves as an annual reunion for former Tiger runners who have gone on to run in college, and for the 25th-anniversary race, the event returns the founder and originator of the race as its honorary starter.

"Besides the usual excitement of seeing our current and past runners compete on the course this year, coach Jim Price, the creator of the event, is going to be our honorary starter," Patrylak said. "We're looking forward to giving him the recognition as an educator at EHS, the legendary cross country coach and creator of Mud Mountain that he deserves."

The format for the race remains the same, with individuals and teams competing for honors, with the race starting at 8 a.m., and a one-mile fun run, starting off following the race at 9 a.m. The runners will also enjoy much community support along the course as well. In addition, vendors and other fun activities will be scheduled.

Online registration concludes on Wednesday night, with registration and race packet pickup set for The Cyclery bicycle and fitness shop on 2472 Troy Road in Edwardsville, by the Target store, on Friday between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. In addition, race day registration will take place at the site beginning at 6 a.m.

Spectators and participants are reminded that traffic in both directions of University Drive will be closed starting early in the morning, and parking will be available on SIUE lots R-6 through R-9. Shuttle buses will be available to transport runners and spectators to and from the course, and everyone is being advised to arrive early in order to get to the event on time.

Although COVID will still affect the race to some extent, Patrylak feels that it's important to hold the race in person this year after having 2020 be a virtual event.

"To me, it's important to be here in person," Patrylak said. "And at the same time, we're still feeling the effects of COVID. We're not going to have as many alumni as we would like, due to short notice."

The race still enjoys great community-wide support, including the many local businesses that help sponsor the event, and many members of the local running

community are going to turn out and compete, also an indicator of the great support the race enjoys.

"Absolutely, it's going to be exciting to see those familiar faces from the community," Patrylak said, "along with all the past, current, and future athletes."

Currently, the number of registrants sits at about 200, and Patrylak hopes to have between 250 and 300 runners by the time the race goes off Saturday morning. But there's one aspect of the race that he's very proud of.

"We're looking at the 200-mark for participants," Patrylak said, "and we're hoping to get to between 250-300. Thanks to all the local businesses for their generosity, even with just being out of COVID. This will be one of our highest fundraising totals in Mud Mountain history."

For more information on the race, its history, and to register, please log on to the event's website, www.mudmountain5k.org.