

## HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING

## 22nd Flagstaff Running Series honors its predecessor

BY NEIL WEINTRAUB  
Special to the Daily Sun

I'm excited to announce that registration for the 22nd annual Flagstaff Running Series value package of five iconic local road and trail races is open (see dates below). Thanks to sponsorship by Loven Contracting, the Series returns with its usual perks.

Having voluntarily helped organize the Series since its 2005 inception, I thought many runners who have relocated to Flagstaff over the past three decades would be interested in learning about its pioneering predecessor, the Northland Summer Circuit (NSC).

On Sunday, April 12, 1981, Arizona Daily Sun Sports Editor Dan Engler's "Out of Bounds" column noted: "Runners curious as to just exactly where they rank with their own age and sex will be offered the opportunity to answer that question for themselves this summer thanks to a little innovative thinking from the newly formed Flagstaff Road and Track Club" (FRATC). Engler wrote how FRATC assigned a 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 scoring system

TISSAW'S Sports Center		The Flagstaff Road & Track Club	
1991 NORTHLAND SUMMER CIRCUIT			
EVENT	DATE	LOCATION	CONTACT
NACA Sacred Mountain 10K	May 11; 9:00 am	Fort Tuthill County Fairgrounds	Pat Mahalish 526-2968
14th Annual Ft. Tuthill 10 Miler	June 9; 8:00 am	Fort Tuthill County Fairgrounds	Mike McCallister
TAC 10 Mile State Championship Event			
Winslow C.C. 8K & 2 Mile	June 15; 8K, 8:15 am 2m; 7:30 am	Winslow, Az	Rick Morrison 289-2279
Rotary Club Ind. Day 12K & 2 Mile	July 6; 6:00 pm	Williams, Az South 4th St.	Brian James 635-2202
Nordic Center 8K Trail Run	July 14; 9:00 am	Flagstaff, Az	Bob Alexander 774-6216
Flagstaff Medical Center Ellen Rasmussen Memorial 13th Annual Life 10K & 5K Runs	July 20; 8:00 am	Flagstaff Athletic Club East	Perry Davison 779-3366 / 774-7513
Tissaw's Sports Center Tour of the Town 10K	July 27; 7:45 am	Tissaw's Sports 109 N. Leroux	Jeff Bauknecht Rob Shedd 1-800-352-6189 774-2960
Enid & Tuffy Rice Memorial Run 2 Mile Family Walk, & 1/4 Mile Tot Trot	8:00 am	Flagstaff, AZ	
Big Brothers Half Marathon	Aug. 17; 8:00 am	Fort Tuthill County Fairgrounds	Chuck Gustafson 774-0649
Buffalo Park 5K Championship Race	Aug. 24; 9:00 am	Buffalo Park Flagstaff, AZ	Mike McCallister 526-4818



The last Northland Summer Circuit schedule of races as advertised in the Arizona Daily Sun on May 5, 1991.

COURTESY

based on a runner's top five races from any of the 10 NSC events, which stretched across the northland from Winslow to Williams and south to Mormon Lake.

I jumped into my first NSC race at the July 26, 1986, Tissaw's Tour-of-the-Town 10K. We started on Leroux Street in front of the old Tissaw's Sporting Goods, and after a quick right turn, headed straight up Cherry Hill. Barely acclimated to

7,000 feet, I enjoyed the camaraderie and new friends I made at the race and was hooked on the Circuit. Sadly though, it ended without much fanfare in 1991.

Nat White, one of FRATC's and NSC's founders, told me that, after 11 years, Flagstaff's first racing series faded away due to its longtime leaders moving on to other life priorities, and no one in the community stepped forward to keep

it alive.

However, in late 2004, a handful of race organizers met at the Pay 'N Take to renew interest for Flagstaff's oldest nonprofit races, reimagining it into the Flagstaff Running Series. As I was part of that meeting, we all agreed to pool our resources and volunteers that allowed us to offer a value package for the four races.

While this year's registration is open until June 14, the best value for the

five races is \$185 and \$160 for students (ages 18 and younger) through March 12. The Kids' Dash package is \$50 at all times. While you can always register for races individually, the package is a great value, especially if you plan on running at least four of the five events.

In addition to each race's division awards, shirts and swag, Series runners receive a colorful pair of running

socks, and those who run at least four races will again earn a well-deserved Pizzicetta pizza. You can also opt to join the "Badges, Hoses and Healing" friendly team competition.

Registering is easy. Once you check out, you're registered for all five races. To learn more about the Series and its race dates, visit RunSignUp.com and search "Flagstaff Run Series." You will be glad you did all summer long!

*An avid recreational runner since he was 12, Neil Weintraub cofounded Northern Arizona Trail Runners Association (NATRA) in 2001. This year NATRA is celebrating 25 years of Saturday morning social trail adventures of 5 to 8 miles that are always free to runners and walkers of all ages and abilities. Learn more about how to join for free by visiting natra.org.*

*Rachel Smith is a mom of two amazing daughters, a professional runner and the coordinating editor of this column. She wishes you all the best in 2026 and asks you to share your running-related story to the column by emailing her at rachscheid18@gmail.com.*

## EAGLES

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Sophomore Izzy Bland kept the energy up with a couple of shots that went just high in the moments after the opening goal. Sophomore goalkeeper Nola Henderson did not get her first touch until 10 minutes in as she left the box to clear out a Thunderbird through ball.

On the other end, Kuntz had her work cut out for her to keep the match from getting out of hand. She made a diving stop on a well-placed shot from sophomore Bryleigh Adams about 13 minutes in.

The Titans found the equalizer on their first true shot on goal midway through the first half. Junior midfielder Grace Hornburg scored from long distance with Henderson out of position to tie it at 1-1 with 23:37 remaining in the first half.

Thunderbird preserved the tie with great defensive stops on shots from juniors Elise Welker and Morgan Maloney. Flagstaff had back-to-back corner kicks stopped near the end of the half and entered the break all square.

The Eagles scored their three second-half goals within 17 minutes, sucking all the life out of a Titans squad that had done well to end Flagstaff possessions. Maloney scored what would ultimately be the game-winner just over five minutes into the half with a deep shot that soared into the top corner of the net.

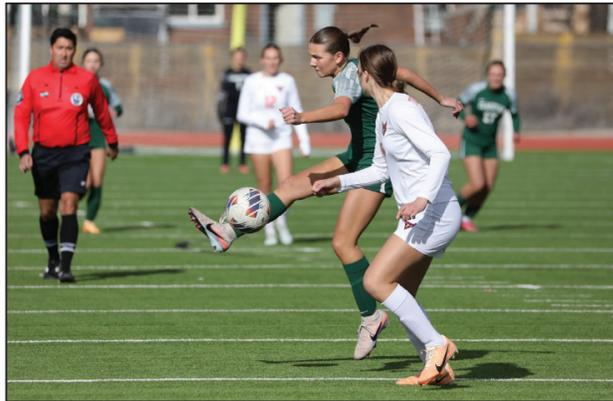
Berry called it one of the best goals she has seen at the high school level.

"We've been putting her up top more," Berry said. "She drives, she's tenacious and she'll look for that shot. That goal, no one's saving that."

Five minutes later, Maloney helped extend the lead after receiving a pass from junior Emma Martin. Maloney ran forward and set up an open look for Welker that froze the opposing goalkeeper.

"I just knew to win the games, we had to make the goals and take shots from anywhere," Maloney said. "Our team was working really hard. We had some great shots, but I just knew we needed to put one away."

Thunderbird opted to make a keeper switch soon after, bringing in sophomore Sarah Roberts to play at net and mov-



Flagstaff's Morgan Maloney (4) receives a pass during a 4A State Play-in match against Thunderbird on Thursday at Flagstaff High School.



Flagstaff's He'Laina Kendall (18) shoots the ball during a 4A State Play-in match against Thunderbird on Thursday at Flagstaff High School.



Flagstaff's Anaya Abdallah (11) fights for possession during a 4A State Play-in match against Thunderbird on Thursday at Flagstaff High School.

ing Kuntz into a position on the pitch.

Welker sealed the deal with her second goal, taking a long shot after playing a short corner kick. She has built quite a highlight reel of plays at Rick Smith Athletic Field of late. She scored the game-winner in extra time against Mingus Union on Flagstaff's Senior Day on Feb. 3, marking the second match of the Eagles' current four-match winning

streak.

"I think it's awesome that we peaked at the right time," Maloney said. "The beginning of the season, we were playing some hard teams and not quite getting the results we wanted. But now, it's the right time to be winning."

Thunderbird ended the regular season with consecutive 7-0 losses, the latter of which was against Coconino. Berry said watching the film of that



Flagstaff's Shasta D'arpa (22) battles for the ball during a 4A State Play-in match against Thunderbird on Thursday at Flagstaff High School.



Flagstaff's Sloane Saul (17) takes a corner kick during a 4A State Play-in match against Thunderbird on Thursday at Flagstaff High School.



Flagstaff's Izzy Bland (13) winds up to shoot the ball during a 4A State Play-in match against Thunderbird on Thursday at Flagstaff High School.

match helped build a game plan for how to handle the Titans.

"It was that film, in addition to others, that kind of gave us an idea of how to play," Berry said. "Obviously, we're familiar with how Coco plays, so we used that to understand how Thunderbird reacted."

The Titans had gone 5-0-1 in matches before those two losses. After finishing last season 3-9, they saw their season

come to an end in the play-in, as it did in 2024.

Flagstaff is set to get a shot at revenge against the Panthers in the first round of the 4A State playoffs on Tuesday, likely at 4 p.m. Coconino defeated Flagstaff for the first time since 2007 back on Jan. 13 at Flag High. The Panthers will be coming off a 2-0 loss in the first round of the Open Tournament to Arizona College Prep on Tuesday.