

## Waltham TC Named USATF-New England Athlete of the Month for December 2011



*Photo: Waltham TC*

**BOSTON – The Waltham Track Club Youth Girls** cross country team has been named USA Track & Field – New England’s Athlete of the Month for December 2011. On December 10, at the USATF National Junior Olympic Cross Country Championships in Myrtle Beach, SC, the Waltham TC Youth Girls team (age 13-14) won the national title in their division.

This was the largest girls race at the championships with 263 finishers and 24 teams. Scoring for the Waltham Track Club in order of finish were Leah Brams, Rebecca Grusby, Lauren Ilsley, Sonya Jampel, Courtney Aylaian, Zoe Gompers, Charlotte Sykes and Lindsey Mogan. The top five places added to a winning total of

131 points, beating the San Diego Roadrunners who scored 143.

The 4k national championship course was run at the Whispering Pines Golf Course in Myrtle Beach. The course was flat and fast, unlike the hilly terrain that the Waltham Track Club is accustomed to for training and racing. This presented both challenge and opportunity.

The Youth Girl’s team had already won three major cross country titles this fall; the Boston Mayor’s Cup, the Wayland Cross Country Festival and the New England Championships. Yet three weeks before the national race, the team had lost by one point to the Granite State Flash at the Region 1 Championships in Queensbury, NY. After that regional meet, Waltham Track Club head coach, **Joe Tranchita**, emphasized to the girls the importance of their ability to run as a pack.

They executed this strategy extremely well in the championship race as the top four girls stayed together through a very fast 5:39 opening mile. They were still together as they reached two miles in 11:52. Over the last 800 meters, each girl ran as hard as she could, with Leah Brams leading the team with a time of 14:40.38, good for 11<sup>th</sup> place overall. She was quickly followed by Rebecca Grusby, Lauren Ilsley, Sonya Jampel and the rest of the team. “Team pack running,” Coach Tranchita told the Waltham News Tribune, “to finish within 19 seconds of each other is just phenomenal...they have really come to understand cross country running and how to execute from start to finish.”

Two other Waltham Track Club teams traveled to JO nationals. The 11-12 year old girls team finished 6<sup>th</sup>, while the 11-12 year old boys team placed 10<sup>th</sup>. Coach Tranchita notes that this is the third national cross country title for the club and that the club has placed teams in the top five on eight occasions.