

# TORRES, FLANAGAN, EARN NCAA TITLES

By DON SIKORSKI  
*Special to the Bulletin*

Stanford's depth made them the favorite; Boaz was talking the talk; Colorado wished Ritz had been healthy; and Jorge Torres had no intention of finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> again. Although it's not the a Bowl game or a Final Four, there was still much anticipation going into the NCAA Cross-Country Championships. When the smoke had cleared, Jorge Torres of Colorado, Shalane Flanagan of the University of North Carolina, the Stanford men, and the BYU women were the winners at the 2002 NCAA Cross-Country Championships on November 25<sup>th</sup> in Terre Haute, Indiana. Torres, a senior who had earned runner-up finishes in last year's XC championships as well as at 5,000 meters both indoors and outdoors on the track last season, was determined not to be second best again in 2002. A number of mid-race surges seem to take just enough out of the legs of his nearest challenger, Alistair Craig of Arkansas, and Torres was able to fend off the South-African Craig by 1.3 seconds down the final stretch to claim his first NCAA title. Torres clocked 29:04 for the 10-kilometer course to become the 1<sup>st</sup> American winner since former Colorado star Adam Goucher won it all back in 1998. His Colorado team finished 4<sup>th</sup> overall, despite the team's sophomore sensation Dathan Ritzenhein, 4<sup>th</sup> a year ago as a frosh, forced to red-shirt the season due to an injury. Vin Lananna's Stanford Cardinals, led by Grant Robinson's 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish, placed four runners in the top 10 to earn the team championship. Wisconsin was a distant 2<sup>nd</sup>, 60 points back.

Much of the championships' pre-race hype centered around the trash talking of confident Kenyan Boaz Cheboiywo, the defending NCAA champion running for Eastern Michigan who had promised to "punish his opponents". David Kimani of Alabama, the NCAA champion in 1999, was also considered a favorite. But neither Cheboiywo nor Kimani were able to stay with the lead group, with both dropping off the pace just after 7 kilometers. Cheboiywo would finish 7<sup>th</sup> with Kimani back in 11<sup>th</sup>, well back of the duel emerging between Torres and Craig. Torres, a native of Wheeling, Illinois, had enough hometown support to claim the title. Torres isn't the only fast guy in the family; his twin brother and teammate Ed finished 10<sup>th</sup> overall.

Flanagan, a junior from Marblehead, MA, became the first UNC female to win an NCAA Cross-Country title and the first Tar Heel since Jack Milne in 1947 to earn an NCAA Cross-Country title. Her winning time of 19:36 over the 6,000 meter course was also a course record despite windy conditions and temperatures in the mid 30's. Flanagan, who is coached by former University of Connecticut standout Mike Whittlesey, also has genetics in her favor; her Mom Cheryl Treworgy is a former NCAA Cross-Country champion herself (winning at the same Indiana State campus over 30 years ago) and a former world record holder in the marathon. Flanagan was expected to be a contender for a national title a year ago as well, but finished a disappointing 22<sup>nd</sup>. This year, her fitness level clearly put her at the front, as she controlled the race from the mile mark. Kate O'Neill of Yale, a former Massachusetts high school rival of Flanagan's, was 2<sup>nd</sup> overall, 9 seconds back. Alicia Craig and Lauren Freshman, both of Stanford, finished 3-4. O'Neill's twin sister Laura, also competing for Yale, finished 13<sup>th</sup> overall. Brigham Young won back-to-back women's team titles, bettering Stanford 85-113.

New England runners also has strong showings. Dartmouth's Tom McArdle, who had qualified as an individual, was 8<sup>th</sup> overall, while former Stonington High School standout Tyler McCabe finished 72<sup>nd</sup> overall, running 2<sup>nd</sup> man for Providence College. The Friars finished a very respectable 13<sup>th</sup> as a team. The NCAA Championship race brings together the cream of the crop in distance racing and is one of the most competitive races there is nationally. The strong showings of Torres and Flanagan give even more hope to the future of American distance running.

## Racing Roundup

- More scholastic Cross-Country news.....Former Fitch High School standout Brad Malay, now competing for Southern Connecticut State University, finished 157<sup>th</sup> overall at the Division II XC Nationals at Ashland University.
- Jim Butler's Connecticut College team finished a strong 20<sup>th</sup> place at the Division III National XC Championships in Northfield, Minnesota. The Camels, who were ranked 24<sup>th</sup> going into the National meet, were led by seniors Adam Fitzgerald (57<sup>th</sup>) and Dave Clayman (68<sup>th</sup>). New London's Will McGuire, a former Williams School runner and now a sophomore at Haverford (PA) College, finished 90<sup>th</sup> overall, just ahead of Matt Downin of the Coast Guard Academy (91<sup>st</sup> overall). Ryan Bak of Trinity College, a former Suffield (CT) High School standout, won the race overall in 25:01. For his team's accomplishments, Butler was also named the Eastern Region's Division III Coach of the Year.
- The Manchester Road Race on Thanksgiving Day has continued to grow into a major road race and social event. This year, the prior day's snowfall did not interfere, although temperatures in the mid-teens greeted the 11,000 plus runners. Andrew Letherby of Australia adapted to the conditions better than Shadrack Kosgei of Kenya did, and that was the two-second difference. Letherby, 29, hit the tape in 22:03 for a debut win in his first Manchester race. Amy Rudolph of Providence won her 5<sup>th</sup> Manchester Road Race title in 8 starts, running 24:25 for 22<sup>nd</sup> place overall. Eric Blake of Lebanon was the top state finisher, posting an impressive 16<sup>th</sup> place overall finish in 24:06 for the 4.748 mile course. Former Waterford High School standout Aaron Curry, now residing in Baltimore, Maryland, was 23<sup>rd</sup> overall, while E.O. Smith grad Hunter Spencer, now competing at Kentucky, was 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Ahmed Haji of Conard (West Hartford) High School and Megan Owen of Killingly both earned trips to the Footlocker National High School Cross-Country Championships. Haji, a junior who had won both the Connecticut and New England Championships, finished in 7<sup>th</sup> place overall, just 7 seconds off Brendan Fennell's (NY) winning time of 15:33, in the Eastern qualifier at Van Courtlandt Park. In the girls' race, Owen, who will compete for the University of North Carolina next season, finished 5<sup>th</sup> overall in 18:11. Ari Lambie of Massachusetts ran 17:34 to earn a 14-second win. The top eight finishers from each of the four regions earn All-America status, with all 32 runners competing in the National Championship race at San Diego's Balboa Park on December 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Another reminder that the Annual Tommy Toy Fund Run will take place on Friday evening, December 13<sup>th</sup>. The 3-Mile group jog through downtown Norwich with Santa begins at 7:00pm in front of Billy Wilson's Ageing Still on 57 Broadway. Entry fee is an unwrapped toy. The Mohegan Striders Running Club will also be accepting membership applications for 2003 after the event.

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