

An Historical Look at the ASU Cross Country Program

The 'Valley of the Sun' is considered one of the finest training areas for distance runners in the country and has long held this tradition. Former U.S. Olympian Steve Scott gave the area its first world-class performer, and now many Arizona State University graduates and distance runners train in the area as the boom continues.

Several top distance runners — Lisa Ondieki, Yobes Ondieki, Bill Rodgers, Rob deCastella, John Tracey and Dieter Baumann, the '92 Olympic 5,000 meter champion — also do the majority of their training in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

Such races as the Phoenix Marathon and Fiesta Bowl Mile, along with countless 10k and road races have strengthened the Valley's climb toward the top in the distance running community.

Presently, the likes of ASU graduates Todd Lewis, Kelly Cordell, Jill Sienicki, Treg Scott, Mike Scannell, Laura LaMena, Maria Trujillo and Jeff Smith have continued to pursue their running careers in Tempe. And there are numerous reasons for this region's growth in distance running.

"Once people see that other runners are having success here, they want to come down here to train with them," says Treg Scott, a former all-America at ASU. "The better the training competition and conditions, the more popular this area will become for distance runners."

Scott was a member of the American record-setting 4x800 meter relay team during his collegiate days and has beaten some of the nation's premier milers — Jim Spivey, Steve Scott and Jeff Atkinson.

Former teammate Mike Scannell began his running days at Arizona State in 1981, and who would have ever imagined the success that this former walk-on would enjoy. Following his graduation, Scannell, 27, continued to develop as a distance runner and won his initial marathon outing — the 1987 Phoenix Marathon. Despite running in just four marathons, Scannell has made his mark in the event. He was ranked among the top 15 U.S. marathoners in 1989 and represented the United States at the '89 World University Games, as well as the '87 and '89 U.S. Olympic Festivals. The 1980 graduate of Tempe's McClintock High School also competed at '88 U.S. Olympic Trials.

"I think that a great deal of my progress is due to the high quality of local runners. The environment is also conducive to train year round. There are numerous places to train as well as different types of terrain (desert, green belt, hills), which helps with the training process."

The climate is also a positive for the distance runner, as this community receives more than 320 days of sunshine annually.

Scannell also feels that more of the ASU graduates are living in the Valley, and with that decision, the Valley has become a rising star on the distance running scene.

Meanwhile, LaMena enjoyed success during her Sun Devil career and has taken the next step in becoming one of the top female distance runners in the country. LaMena won the 1987 Pac-10 10,000 meter championship and later earned all-America accolades at the NCAAs. The next fall, the 1988 graduate of ASU qualified for the NCAA Cross Country Championship and has followed the lead of '88 Olympians Lynn Nelson, another ASU product, and Trujillo.

LaMena feels that part of the reason for the recent success of Valley-trained runners is the number of runners who train together and the experience gained

from becoming more established. LaMena won several big road races in 1992 and '93 and is a former San Diego half-marathon champion (1990). She also recorded a 4th place finish at the 1990 TAC Championship (10k).

Trujillo, who was born in Mexico, compiled a solid collegiate career at ASU after transferring from Hartnell (Calif.) Junior College. She posted top finishes at the '83 World University Games (4th), '83 Boston Marathon (9th), '83 New York Marathon (11th) and the '90 Boston Marathon (3rd).

She represented her homeland at the '88 Olympic Games in the marathon with a 25th place finish.

A former graduate assistant at ASU, Smith competed in the 1992 Olympic Trials in the 5,000 meters and steeplechase.

Lewis, a five-time all-America at ASU, finished sixth in the 5,000 meters at the 1993 USA Track Championships and was a member of the U.S. national team which traveled to England. Lewis was also a 5,000m participant at both the '93 Olympic Sports Festival in San Antonio and the World University Games in Buffalo.

With the talent of the aforementioned runners and such current Sun Devil rising stars as Christie Masson and Erin Scroggins, this strong heritage of distance runners with Arizona State ties figures to remain intact for years to come.



Teresa Barrios

1988 Des Moines, Iowa 51st 17:32

Mike Elder

1974 Bloomington, Ind. 145th 32:00.11

Laura LaMena

1987 Charlottesville, Va. 62nd 17:26.65

Larry Lawson

1974 Bloomington, Ind. 16th * 30:22.93

Todd Lewis

1991 Tucson, Ariz. 11th * 30:54

Lynn Nelson

1983 Bethlehem, Pa. 61st 17:58.3

Sabrina Peters

1982 Bloomington, Ind. 45th 17:56.5

1980 Seattle, Wash. (AIAW) 44th 18:01

Mike Stahr

1984 University Park, Pa. 101st 31:31.5

* = earned all-America status

All-America status

The top 25 American athletes at the NCAA Championships (men and women) are granted all-America status.