



The Month That Was – Alex Wolf-Root

Nationals. That's the word for June when it comes to USA Track and Field. First you have the NCAA D1 Champs in Des Moines, Iowa, then the month ends up with the USATF Nationals – the qualifier for the World Champs in Daegu, South Korea – at Historic Hayward Field. (Yes, "Historic" is part of the name. Ridiculous? I think yes.) There's other stuff too, but it's these bookends that shaped The Month That Was

NCAA DI Champs

Two years ago, Texas A&M produced an historic double-team championships, both men and women. Last year, Texas A&M produced an historic double-team championships, both men and women. This year? This year, Texas A&M produced an historic double-team championships, both men and women. And in true dramatic track & field action, it came down to the last event both timeads, the 4x400m relay.

But arguably the biggest story of the meet was the weather.

Freak thunderstorms interrupted the meet multiple times, leading to delays, breaks, and, in one case, postponement of events until the next morning. On day two, with four jumps left in the long jump, two events (javelin, 1,500m run) in the men's 1,500m, one of three 4x400m women's heats, all 4x400m men heats, and the men's 10,000m still to be run, they stopped the meet.

Thus, a three-day decathlon was born, all the time qualifiers for the women's 4x400m relay came in heat three, and the 10,000m/5,000m doublers had it all the more tough, as they had less than 24 hours recovery time. No excuses (that I heard) were made, but it was a different sort of situation, for sure.

Some actual competition highlights:

Ngonidzashe Makusha: Makusha started of Florida State's run for the championship (ended up second by a point) with his very first jump in the long jump, hitting 7.79m (25'6.75"). And it only get better. His next two prelim jumps saw 7.97 and 7.93, letting him sit in third. **Damar Forbes** of LSU and **Will Claye** had both bettered 8 meters, with Forbes hitting 8.15m for his third jump and Claye at 8.08m on his very first.

Marquise Goodwin of Texas wanted to make it interesting too, as on his first of the final three jumps he hit 8.02m to move ahead of Makusha into third. But right after that, Makusha blew those marks out of the water with a world-leading 8.40m (0.0mps wind too!) or 27'6.75" for your imperial folks. That mark also broke the stadium record held by World Champion **Dwight Phillips**.

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But the competition wasn't done there. Claye was up next, and was able to respond with an improvement of his own, hitting 8.20m to move back into second, ahead of Forbes. That lasted all of a minute, as Forbes then popped an 8.23m to re-take silver position.

Adding to the fun Goodwin hit 8.16. on his fifth jump, with Texas Tech's Bryce Lamb joining the party on the final jump in terrible weather to hit 8.15m. All in all, 5 jumped 8.15m or better, with 7 cracking 27 feet. Deepest NCAA Long Jump ever? Maybe. Deepest since I've been alive? Probably.

Let's stick with the jumps, yea? Remember that Will Claye guy? While he was only third, albeit with a ridiculous 8.20m jump, he was the only one of the field to break 8 on all legal jumps (three of six were fouls). Well, he was back in action on day 4 with the triple jump. He started off well, hitting 16.84m on jump one, to again find himself in that second spot. Because on the first jump of one **Christian Taylor** of Florida, the junior popped a 17.28m (+2.0mps) to smash the stadium record of US Olympian **Kenta Bell**.

Taylor was 10th in the long jump at 7.83m, but this was clearly his real event.

But Claye wasn't done yet. Jump two produced a 17.07m jump, also over the old stadium record. To give you a better idea, that's 56 feet. And on jump three, Claye surprised Taylor (and everyone else) with a 17.35m jump, to take the pole position heading into the final three jumps. No one else had cracked 16.50m yet.

In round four, Taylor was right back, edging Claye's 17.35m with a 17.40m of his own. That's 57+feet. A minute later, Claye was back, with 17.41m. For both the fifth round was lackluster, but on their final jumps, there was magic.



Taylor had the penultimate jump of the competition, and made it count, skyrocketing to a 17.80m (+2.3mps) jump, or a whopping 58'4.75". It was over, right? Yes. Claye had a valiant final jump all his own, and while his 17.62m (+2.9mps) or 57'9.75" would win nearly other year, he'd have to settle for two silver's.

Fortunately, both these jumpers, plus the top-5 from the long jump, are all back next year.

Earlier on, I mentioned **Ngonidzashe Makusha**. Well, the long jump may have been his specialty, but he was so fast on the runway that his coach had him try the 100m at the conference champs. He won. And on Day 3, he found himself in the final of the NCAA 100m dash, after running just a handful throughout his college career.

Well, he was out slow, but if it stayed that way I wouldn't be writing this. While his block skills clearly weren't as polished as the rest of the field, about 50m in his speed surely turned it on. The last 20m it was all Makusha, as he powered home in an astounding 9.89 (+1.3mps) collegiate record, breaking Olympic Medalist and announcer-extraordinaire **Ato Bolden's** mark from 1996. Second place's 9.97 would have been huge news, and a stadium record, but a 9.89 from a college junior long jumper?!

Yea, he just signed a fat endorsement deal. Well, after he helped his team to the 4x100m relay title, of course.

Alright, **Distance Action**. I know that's really what the majority of you care about.

Well, do you consider the 800m distance? I don't, it's middle-distance. But whatever. The men's race was AMAZING. Honestly, it's one of those things you have to see for yourself. Go here: <http://www.letsrun.com/2011/final800-0611.php>

K, real distance action: **Men's 10,000m**

Only four NCAA athletes have ever broken 27:30 for 10,000m. One of them was the great Henry Rono. The other three in orders of PB: **Sam Chelanga**, Liberty. College Record-Holder at 27:08.39, Reigning Champ, NCAA XC Champ, second indoors 5,000m. **Stephen Sambu**, Arizona. 27:28.64, NCAA XC Runner-Up. **Leonard Korir**, Iona, 27:29.30, NCAA Indoor 5,000m Champ. It was going to be fun.

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The pace started off solid, as they crossed 3,200m at a tick over 9 minutes. There were some hangers-on at this point, but a surge by Korir dropped the field to these three standouts, as they continued to click off 67's/68s for laps. Around 7,000m they started to lag, as they were all gauging each other's fitness/ability to kick.

With 1,200m to go, the race was on. Korir made a big move, dropping a sub-65 second lap. Chelanga and Sambu caught up, and all three were there with two to go. This time it was Chelanga's turn, and he quickly opened up a gap with ~700m to go. Sambu was gone, while Korir spotted him those 10 or so meters. But about 500m to go the gap was shrinking, and Korir quickly overtook a slowing Chelanga. It wasn't even close after that. Korir's final lap, 56.18, easily brought him the victory. Chelanga second, Sambu third.

Down the line, all 8 scorers broke the 29 minute barrier.



Next up: Women's **5,000m** and **1,500m**:

What was billed as **Sheila Reid** versus **Jordan Hasay** yet again turned into simply the Sheila Reid show. If you forgot, here's a little of their history:

www.empirerunners.com/newsletters/apr2011/articles/f3.pdf



From the gun this race was hot. 5:02 at 4 laps, 9:34 at 3,000m. 22 of the 24 person field was under 9:40 at 3,000m. And then it only got faster. Hasay went to the front and dropped some 75s (previously running 76/77s) but everyone was still there with a kilometer to go. With two laps to go things got serious, and the field got whittled down to five: Hasay, Reid, **Emily Infield**, **Abby D'Agostino**, and **Kathy Kroeger**.

Hasay led this penultimate lap with all five of them at 71-point. Kroeger was the first to falter, as she faded to a 72 second last lap for 5th in 15:45. Hasay had the lead still with 200m to go, but Reid was flying by her, followed closely by Infield. Dartmouth Frosh D'Agostino came up to challenge for third, just getting Hasay at the line, while up front Reid was able to hold off Infield, 15:37.57-15:38.23. Reid's last lap: 64.54.

Notably, D'Agostino is now the No.2 US Junior ever, behind only **Molly Huddle**, also the current American Record Holder.

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Well Reid and Hasay were both back in the 1,500m on the final day. The pace started slow, with the field coming through 700m at 2:04. The field began to pick up just after that, as the next circuit was crossed in a respectable 67. Still, everyone was there. On the backstretch Hasay went into the lead, trying to take the individual title and score much-needed points for Oregon (ended up second for the third straight year as a team).

Reid, on the other-hand, was sitting in the pack. But somehow, she found an opening, moving from the outside of lane one to the inside, passing on the rail, to move into first. While others followed, Reid's kick was unmatched, as her 4:14.57 took the win by nearly a full second. The top 6 all broke 4:17, with Hasay fading to 4:17.67 for 8th. Reid's last lap here: 62.93. To give you an idea of the ridiculousness of that, the winner of the women's 800m closed in 62.34.

Adidas Grand Prix

No no, I'm not talking about any of the "Grand Prix's" here in Santa Rosa, of course! The adidas Grand Prix is one of the biggest track meets in the world, as it's one of the two Diamond League Meets in the USA. There was a lot of big action, but only 10% of you have read this far down, so we're going with two events: Men's, 1,500m and HS Boy's Mile.

1,500m

TORRENCE! **David Torrence**, the guy who had to bring attention to himself with a screaming-downhill sub-4 mile to try to be seen by a sponsor, the guy who could barely make rent on a tiny room in a tiny apartment in Berkeley (rooming with Empire Great **Dawit Tesfasilassie**), the guy who was the rabbit for the first Heart and Sole Elite Mile, well that guy lined up against some of the top milers in the world, including Reigning Olympic Silver Medalist **Nick Willis** of New Zealand.

And it was Torrence who came out on top.

Coming wide on the final turn, Torrence was able to fight from within a very tight pack to wage a three-person battle with Willis and **Caleb Ndiku**, a 3:32.02 guy from Kenya. For a while it looked like Willis was going to take it, after all he was the Olympic Silver Medalist with 3:32.17 and 1:45.54 PB's, but Torrence was right with him with 50m to go. It was only in the last few steps that Torrence had it won, 3:36.15 to 3:36.46.

And it wasn't just these three studs in the field. American Olympic Flag-Bearer **Lopez Lomong**, a 3:32.20 guy was 6th, American Olympian **Lionel Manzano** (3:32.37) was 7th, with the rest of the field having give or take 3:35 PB's. (Torrence is 3:34.25)

Clearly excited, Torrence quickly went over to thank rabbit **David Krummenacker**, himself a 3:31.96/1:43.92 guy, also a former World Indoor 800m Champ. First time I've ever seen that from a pro right after the race. Awesome.



But arguably the biggest event on the American front was the HS Dream Mile. **Lukas Verzbicas**, the new National Record Holder in the 2mile (8:29) versus **Jantzen Oshier**, the CA State 1,600m Champ (4-flat), versus the other best HS milers across the country. Talk was about a sub-4, with Verzbicas the favorite. In quite the oddity for a HS race, there was even a pace-setter, Pennsylvania's **Conner Manley**.

Manley took out the field in a scintillating 57.68, with the pack at roughly 59. Slowing only slightly, the pack came through half-way just over 2 minutes, and everyone was still there. But just 200m later, at roughly 1,000m in, Verzbicas took over. **Edward Cheserek** followed closely, with Oshier jumping on the train, pulling even with Verzbicas going into the final lap. 3:01.38 at the bell.

And then Verzbicas took off. Oshier was quickly losing ground, and was about 2 second back with 200m to go. He'd end up paying the price for really going for it, ending at 4:06.51 for 5th, though I'd bet he doesn't regret the decision.

But the home-straight was all Verzbicas, who was able to power home alone in 3:59.71, becoming only the fifth high-schooler in the United States to break 4. Next year, his first year as an Oregon Duck, should be exciting!



USA Track and Field Nationals

(To watch the races without knowing results, go to runnerspace.com)

First up, let's recap our local Empire Athletes who competed at the National Championships.

Jake Arnold: Maria Carrillo HS '02, Decathlon. Empire stud in pole vault and hurdles, 2-time NCAA Decathlon Champ, 3-time USA Indoor Heptathlon Champ, reigning USA Decathlon Champ.

While Jake has had a ton of success (he was the reigning champ, after all!) things weren't going too hot coming into the competition. Hampered by a hip flexor injury, Jake hadn't completed a decent decathlon since summer of 2010. Could he bounce back to try to defend his national title?

No. After a sub-par 100m to start things off, Jake had a decent shot put before bowing out to heal up. But it would have taken a herculean effort to win, as **Asthon Eaton**, the world record holder in the indoor heptathlon absolutely dominated, scoring over 8700 points!

Jacqui Wentz: Maria Carrillo HS '06, 3,000m Steeplechase. 3,200m standout, NBL XC Champ, DIII Steeple champ and record holder.

Jacqui made nationals last year in her breakout year (PB dropping from just sub-11 to 10:04 in one year!), but hasn't had as good a season this time out. Qualifying on her performance from last year, Jacqui made the field, but clearly wasn't fit enough for it. After trying to stick on the pace for the first three laps, she fell back a bit on the fourth before dropping out. But can't fault her for taking a chance to compete at the national champs, even knowing she wasn't fully there this season.

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Sara “Bei” Hall: Montgomery HS '01, 3,000m Steeplechase. First 4-time California State XC Champ, All-State 1,600m/3,200m runner, Stanford Standout, World Indoor and World Cross Country team member.

Sara's had some success, no question. But the steeple is new to her. I'm pretty sure she just started dabbling at it last year. But she's done quite well so far, with a 9:39 PB.

While the heats didn't treat her well (she was in the same heat as Jacqui), and she had to qualify on time, she put herself in position in the finals, sitting around 5th or 6th for most of the race. Besides for the first two laps, it was a quick pace, and the pack was splitting up fast, but Hall hung tough. Unfortunately, the top three began to separate around 600m to go, and Sara finished in 5th. A solid performance, but not quite enough to make the World team.

Kim Conley: Montgomery HS '04, 5,000m. Another 1,600m/3,200m standout, part of the MHS State Championship team (with Bei), UC Davis standout qualifying for NCAA XC Nationals and earning all-region honors.

Conley had a good HS career and a solid college career. But unlike most girls with her accolades, she's seen some rapid improvements as a post-collegiate. Competing unattached and training under her old college coach, Conley qualified for USA's in the 10,000m last year, and this season made it in both the 5,000m and 1,500m, dropping her PB from ~4:24 to 4:12 in the later.

As the only runner in the field without a logo or sponsor on her singlet (she wore a blank white tank-top), she valiantly hung on to a blistering pace, led by American Record Holder **Molly Huddle**. The winners would run ~15:10, and Conley's early efforts paid off with a 10th place finish in 15:38, a new PB.

That's it on the local front. Very impressive to have four locals make the national champs, though only the Monty kids did something with it this time... (tough for me to say, as I'm from Carrillo!)

Tyson Gay: 2nd fastest 100m man in history, American Record-Holder, fastest 100m man in 2011, former double-world champ, reigning silver medalist from worlds, etcetcetc, the great Tyson Gay had to drop out due to a hip injury. Unfortunately it's been bugging him all year, and while he was able to run the first round he was just in too much pain for the semi's. Tough.

Sprints: With Tyson gone, **Walter Dix**, the bronze medalist in both the 100m and 200m from the Beijing Olympics, captured the double at Nationals. Also completing a double was **Carmelita Jeter**, the second fastest 100m woman in history (well fastest if you don't count a certain mark that many people don't think is legit....)

Field: Didn't get to watch a ton, so I'll just mention the men's shot put. World Champ **Christian Cantwell** started off with a huge bomb, looking like he'd win from the very first throw of the competition. But then **Adam Nelson**, 2-time Olympic Silver medalist, former World Champ, plus three



world silver medals, uncorked his biggest throw in three-plus years, getting over the 22m mark. That was untouchable today. Except by Nelson, as he bombed another great one shortly thereafter.

Middle-Distances: Just like at NCAA's **Charles Jock** took it out, though not quite as hard. But the field was strung out fast; guess three 800m's in four days will get you tired! **Andrews** wasn't in the same form he was at NCAA's, and while he started in his patented back position, his move never materialized. **KD Robinson**, an 8-time national champ, went with Jock, and it looked like they'd go 1-2 with no one else close. But then **Nick Symmonds**, 3-time defending champ, 2008 Olympian, showed off his come-from-behind-kick for the first time all year, to capture another USA title. Robinson overtook a tiring Jock for second, though Jock held on enough to punch his ticket to Daegu for the world champs.



On the women's side, **Alyssa Montano** (formerly **Johnson**) ex-Cal standout won wire to wire, with five women going sub-2. Five!

The men's 1,500m went out slower than the women's. Yea. It did. 2:11 for the first 800m. This was going to upset the form charts for sure. In the end it was **Matt Centrowitz**, the newly crowned NCAA Champ, who took the win over the great Bernard Lagat. **Leo Manzano** was third, with **Andrew Wheating** a surprising fourth (I thought he'd have won, and woulda put good money on it. Good no



one took me up on it!). But Wheating will make the world team as Lagat is dropping this for the 5,000m.



Women's 1,500m: **Christian Worth-Thomas** has guts. Starting out at a blistering 62 second first lap, she tried to dominate this field wire to wire. And if it was the 1,400m she would have. Unfortunately the wheels came off with about 100m to go, when **Morgan Uceny** flew by, and she just buckled the last 20 meters to be passed by **Jenny (Barringer) Simpson** and **Shannon Rowbury**, the later by just 1/100th of a second. But you have to see this race. If you watch just one race, watch this one. Pure guts. Just 1/100th of a second too little. Owch.



Distances:

10,000m: It was slow from the get-go, so everyone was in it early. When moves finally started to be made at the end of the race, it was all **Galen Rupp**, though **Matt Tegenkamp** held on valiantly. But with 600m to go Rupp just blasted away, winning by about two seconds as he celebrated on the home straight. Fighting for the final qualifying spot was **Scotty Bauhs**, who even came within about 20 meters of Teg on the final straight.



The women's race was all **Shalane Flanagan**, the American Record-Holder. She took the pace from the gun and never settled, clocking 30:59. **Kara Goucher** continued her bounce back from childbirth with an impressive second, with **Jen Rhines** third.

5,000m: **Lagat** versus **Rupp** versus **Chris Solinsky** versus **Tegenkamp** was just as exciting as expected. With a mile to go, these four were out front, and Solinsky, the American Record-Holder at 10,000m, was hammering. Tegenkamp dropped hard, obviously feeling the 10,000m (his second on the track ever?) from the night before, and faded to fifth. But Lagat and Rupp were holding on, despite a 60 low lap. And then there was a 59 second lap. Rupp started to fade a little, and there was even a slight gap back to Lagat. But with 200m to go on the final lap, Lagat flew by. Solinsky was flying, but it was nothing compared to the second fastest 1,500m runner in history. Lagat's last 1,600m was a scintillating 3:57. Solinsky finished just behind, with Rupp under 4 for the final 4 laps as well in third.

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There's only so much room to write here, but once you get me starting to talk running I can't stop! To discuss more great Track and Field action, email runnerforlife86@gmail.com to talk with your resident Track Nut. Or, better yet, find me at the next Empire Runners Summer Track Series sponsored by Heart and Sole. Future dates: July 12th, July 26th, and August 9th. All are Tuesdays at 6:30pm at Santa Rosa HS, home of the Panthers!