

COLORADO'S NATIONAL CHAMPIONS



Mary Decker
1978 (AIAW)

Tenth months after she bettered her own world record in the 1,000-meter run, Mary Decker won Colorado's first national cross country title in her last race, on CU's then-home course, Kent Denver Country Day.

Her course record 16:59.4 bettered the course record she had set earlier that year by a minute.

At the national championships she grabbed the lead from NC State's Julie Shea and defending national champion Kathy Mills of Penn State (who had led the race by as much as 20 yards going into the final loop). Shea passed Mills, and Decker passed Mills and kicked by Shea to win the race by 10 yards.



Mark Scrutton
1982

Mark Scrutton took the lead 300 yards from the finish and beat Zakarie Barie of UTEP by two seconds for the NCAA men's title in Bloomington, Ind.

His first goal when he came to CU in 1980 was to dominate the Big Eight Conference. He did that to the tune of 14 conference titles, surpassing Kansas great Billy Cunningham's record 13 in the early 1930s.

He lost just one Big Eight race, the indoor two-mile run his freshman season. By his senior year he turned in the best two-mile indoor time in the NCAA in winning his second national title.

Shortly after winning that title, he set an unofficial world record in the Newport Beach Back Bay Run with a time of 22:25.8 over the 8k course.



Adam Goucher
1998

The sign of things to come was on Nov. 21, 1994 when then-freshman Adam Goucher crossed the finish line of the NCAA Cross Country Championships in Fayetteville, Ark. as the national runner-up.

His sophomore year he finished sixth.

He redshirted the '96 season and improved to third in the national race as a junior in Greenville, S.C., a race he was predicted to win.

In the last race of his collegiate career, Goucher took the title that had eluded him for five seasons.

Goucher, buoyed by what he called an unbelievable crowd, bettered the Rim Rock Course Record in 29:26.9, 23 seconds ahead of Arizona's Abdi Abdiraham, who had kept pace with Goucher until the last mile when he pulled away from the field.

With the win, Goucher would become the first American to win the fall classic since Bob Kennedy won in 1992, and the first CU runner to complete the distance trifecta of winning national titles in cross country, the indoor and outdoor track seasons.

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Kara Grgas-Wheeler
2000

In the women's championship sweep, fifth-year senior Kara Grgas-Wheeler won CU's first individual title sans AIAW to complete the nation's only individual undefeated campaign. With the title, Grgas-Wheeler capped of a 1,035-0 season beating the next opponent by a total margin of 2:07.

She ran to a dominant finish on the Iowa State Cross Country Course in 20:30.5, 7.3 seconds ahead of the individual runner up in harsh conditions that included a temperature of 17 degrees with a wind chill of minus-19 at the start.

In textbook Colorado fashion, she trailed the lead pack by four seconds after the 1k mark. She had closed in by the 2-mile mark, never losing site of the defending national champion, Wisconsin's Erica Palmer, who was in the lead, but succumbing to the cold. Soon after Grgas-Wheeler bridged the gap, took the lead, and never looked back... until the final crest of the course where she glanced over her shoulder for the first time of the season and began to savor the sprint to the tape.

The title was her third, first in the fall. Her win marked the first time since 1994 that the individual national champion represented on the NCAA Championship Team.



Jorge Torres
2002

With three NCAA runner-up finishes as a junior resting on his shoulders, Jorge Torres held off Arkansas' Allister Cragg in the final meters to cover the Wabash Valley Sports Center 10k challenge in a then-course record 29:04.7 and win his first national title.

In one of the best men's contests in recent memory, Cragg took the race's initial lead, but before the race reached the halfway point, it was a four-man battle between Torres, Cragg, Alabama's David Kimani and Eastern Michigan's Boaz Cheboiywo.

Torres took the lead from '01 champion Cheboiywo at the 7k mark with Cragg and Kimani hanging on, and at the 8k mark it was Torres and Cragg running shoulder to shoulder for the remainder of the race. With the pro-Torres crowd chanting "Torres, Torres", the two took the final turn into the straightaway and Torres made an unanswered surge to build a 10-meter lead at the finish line to close out the nation's only undefeated season and turn in his fifth course record in as many races.

With brother Ed just nine places behind him, the 1-10 punch was the best by a set of twins in the history of the championships.



Dathan Ritzenheim
2003

Twenty-four months after finishing fourth in the 2001 NCAA Championships as a freshman, Dathan Ritzenheim crossed the finish line in Waterloo, Iowa as CU's fourth national champion in six seasons as a redshirt sophomore.

In temperatures that hovered below zero with the windchill factor, Ritzenheim outdistanced a heavily favored Stanford pack led by Ryan Hall in the closing meters to win his first NCAA crown in 29 minutes, 14 seconds, just 1.3 ahead of Hall for the crescendo in the nation's only unbeaten season.

The win marked just the fourth time and first since the 1989 and '90 seasons that two different runners from the same school took back-to-back titles, as Jorge Torres won the race in '02 in Terre Haute, Ind. It was also the first time since 1987 and '88 that Americans had won two straight individual titles and likely the first time that both scenarios have played out simultaneously.

Ritzenheim's rise as the best runner in the nation was even more impressive when considering he had resumed training 10 weeks earlier following femoral stress fractures suffered the previous cross and track seasons.