

Athlete Profiles

Kathleen Trotter and Christian Hesch **2007 Pacific Association Cross Country Champions**

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At the Pacific Association/USA Track & Field and USATF Western Region Cross Country Championships on November 18th, the 2007 men's and women's open champions secured bragging rights in convincing fashion. **Kathleen "Katy" Trotter**, 22, took the open women's 4-mile race held in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park with a 14-second margin of victory. Her winning time was 23:01. **Christian Hesch**, 28, strode away from his open men's competitors over the men's 6-mile course in a winning time of 30:09. Hesch finished with a

comfortable 16-second cushion over second place finisher, Giliat Ghebray, a former NCAA Division I All-American and 2007 U.C Berkeley alumnus. Although both Trotter and Hesch are first-time Pacific Association and USATF Western Region cross-country titlists, that's where their similarities end.



Katy Trotter, a 2007 graduate of Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif., originally hailed from the east coast. She had an outstanding prep career, running for Red Bank Regional High School (Little Silver, N.J.) along with her twin sister, Amanda. As a high school senior, Trotter punctuated her final prep cross country season with a runner-up performance at the 2002 Footlocker National Cross Country Championships. On the track, both Katy and Amanda were part of Red Bank Regional's distance medley relay team that set a national high school record at the 2003 adidas Outdoor Track and Field Championships. That same year, at the prestigious Arcadia Invitational, Trotter raced to a first-place finish in the girls 1,600 meters.

Trotter's collegiate career accomplishments included eight NCAA Division I All-American honors in cross country, indoor track, and outdoor track. She was a member of three Stanford national championship-winning cross country squads. Her freshman 3,000 meter steeplechase time of 10:07.55 remains the second fastest time in Cardinal history and the fastest ever for a freshman at Stanford. In 2004, Trotter competed at the IAAF World Junior Cross Country Championships in Brussels, Belgium. She finished 36th individually, and the USA women's Junior team finished as the fourth-best in the world.



Trotter, Kara June, Anita Giusti (right-left) at XC Champs

Silver Lumsdaine Photo

Trotter, now running for the recently formed Peninsula Distance Club (Palo Alto, Calif.), has come full circle. She is once again under the tutelage of Dena Evans, her coach during her first two years at Stanford. Although she no longer has the structure of the collegiate atmosphere, Trotter is taking the transition in stride.

“It’s been wonderful!” an ebullient Trotter exclaimed about post-collegiate life. “School really took a lot out of me. Not having that stress has given me about ten times more energy than I thought I really would ever have. My training has been the greatest it’s ever been, and I’ve never enjoyed running so much.”

Trotter’s ’07 cross country races worked well into her winter base-building schedule. Following her victory at the Pacific Association USATF/USATF Western Regional Cross Country Championship, she finished fourth at the USATF National Club Cross Country Championships on December 7 in West Chester, Ohio.

“[The PA/USATF Championships] are a fun race where you can see where your fitness level is compared to other ladies,” Trotter commented. “It’s a stepping stone working towards spring track season, building that base and trying to stay strong. It’s always nice to throw in a few races in the fall when you’re trying to gain fitness but don’t really have motivation to keep working through.”

Ultimately, Trotter has her sights set on the 5,000 meters at the 2008 U.S. Olympic Track & Field Trials in Eugene, Ore. If her surname is any indication of future success, this slender, doe-eyed 22-year-old will be moving briskly in the direction of her dreams.

Christian Hesch (Morro Bay, Calif.) could rightfully be given the title of BMOC (Big Man on Campus)—that is, if only distance runners inhabited the campus in question. At six-foot-two and a svelte 170 pounds, this 28-year-old has very little excess adipose tissue on his lean frame. Yet, compared to the average elite distance runner, Hesch’s frame looms as large as his reputation for unconventional race attire and colorful commentary.

Hesch ran the 2007 USATF Pacific Association/Western Regional Championship race unencumbered by the particularly pesky hill (short but steep) that has traditionally graced the Golden Gate Park harrier course for many years. Recently, the infamous hill was removed from the course, and replaced by an adjacent (but flatter) path, because of erosion.

“I must say, the hill change definitely suits me because lugging my lard arse around is not easy up those hills,” Hesch quipped. “Look at [runner-up] Ghebray. He can just float up them.”

Hesch's race strategy of "go out hard, and just keep going" worked to his advantage at the USATF Pacific Association/Western Regional Championships as he broke free from Ghebray at about 3-1/2 miles. Ghebray didn't entirely let go of Hesch until almost a mile later.

"Ghebray made it a little tough out there," Hesch said. "I didn't expect to have to run that hard. We went out ridiculously fast, but I guess cross country is always like that. I guess that's why I don't like cross country," he said, laughing.

In January 2007, Hesch won the Orange County (Calif.) Marathon, his marathon debut, in a very respectable 2:21:18. He broke the course record (while high-fiving spectators near the finish line), and he also met the "B" qualifying standard for the 2008 U.S. Men's Olympic Marathon Trials.

Hesch, however, skipped last November's men's marathon trials in New York City. Instead, he remained on the west coast to run the PA/USATF Cross Country Championships as a final tune-up before returning to one of his perennial favorites, the Run to Feed the Hungry 10K in Sacramento, Calif. on Thanksgiving Day.

"I'm not a marathoner," he insisted. "I ran 16 miles [at Orange County] and then I jog-walked 10. Honestly, I ran 61 [minutes] and change for the last 10 miles. I stopped five or six times."

Initially, Hesch's competitive drive led him to the sport of triathlons—where his muscular endowment was a natural fit. Hesch holds 1998 and 1999 U.S. Junior national championship titles at the Olympic distance triathlon. After retiring from competitive triathlons, which Hesch insisted he will "never, absolutely never" return to due to the all-consuming nature of the sport, Hesch turned his focus to running.

The results were head-turning.

In his first season of competitive track, Hesch qualified for the 2001 USA Outdoor Track & Field Championships at 1,500m with a 3:40.73 recorded at Stanford University's Cardinal Qualifier.

Despite repeat trips to USA nationals in 2002 and 2003, and numerous road race victories, the currently unsponsored 28-year-old finds himself in a dilemma: Should he keep trying to make a tenuous living as a professional runner? Or, hang up the racing shoes, move on with his career, and become a weekend warrior?

Hesch sighed as he contemplated the future.

"I'm certainly not at the height of what I can achieve. I haven't had more than five, maybe six, months of uninterrupted training in the last five years [due to injuries]. Call me crazy, [but] I think I could run 13 flat [5,000 meters] with 12 months of uninterrupted training. A lot of people probably could, but therein lies the rub. You've got to stay healthy for a whole year, or two, or three, and I haven't had that in a long time.

“There’s potential there,” Hesch continued, “but there’s a lot of guys that have a lot of potential, and I’m just one of a bunch of guys. But I think I have as much as a lot of people. If I’m fortunate enough to stay healthy, fine. If not, then I guess that’s not God’s plan for me, and I’ll move on and get a real job.”

As Hesch points towards the 2008 U.S. Olympic Track & Field Trials next year in the 1,500 and 5,000 meters, he will, no doubt, have his fingers crossed — hoping that the Big Man upstairs helps the Big Man on the starting line achieve his running goals.

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