

## HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING

## A decision to go the distance for the team

BY JARRED CORNFIELD  
Special to the Daily Sun

The moments that matter the most. How do we act? How do we respond? Is it courage that leads us in the face of challenge, or does fear win out? In Northern Arizona University's world of track and field, it is much more than simply winning or losing. It is about tradition, loyalty and being lifted up by a special and supportive community.

On the weekend of March 13, our program had the wonderful opportunity to represent NAU at the NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field National Championships in Fayetteville, Arkansas. It is the biggest stage in collegiate indoor track and field, where the best across the country come together to see who is "the best of the best."

Historically, we have fared well at these indoor championships. In 2024, Nico Young stormed to two national titles in the 5000m and 3000m races, leading the NAU men's team to a fourth-place team finish. In 2023, Drew Bosley heroically ran to a runner-up finish in the 3000m and a third-place finish in the 5000m. In 2022, Abdihamid Nur made a name for himself by winning both the 5000m and 3000m titles. The legacy runs strong with more NCAA championship wins from other athletes such as Geordie Beamish and Andy Trouard.



Northern Arizona University's Rheinhardt Harrison, Josiah Johnson, Tor Hotung-Davidsen and Colin Sahlman celebrate winning the program's first-ever distance medley relay national title.

Going into this year's national championships, many eyes were on Lumberjacks senior Colin Sahlman. On Feb. 1, Colin raced the 800m event at the esteemed Millrose Games in New York City, where he was up against Olympic medalists and a world champion. Colin not only won the race, but he also set a new collegiate record of 1:44.70. By the end of the regular season, he would run marks to be ranked top five in the

NCAA in the 800m, mile, 3000m and distance medley relay.

Going into the national championships, many people were wondering, "What will Colin race?" With so many options, we sat down together and talked about the different possibilities and worked through what we wanted to do. Ultimately, Colin made a bold decision to scratch out of the 800m and mile and attempt the distance medley relay on Friday

night and come back and race the 3000m on Saturday night. Why? To put the team first and do something courageous and fun with his friends in a relay, and then challenge himself in an event he had less experience in and wasn't necessarily the favorite in.

For the relay, we lined up recent transfer Rheinhardt Harrison on the 1200m, followed by Josiah Johnson (400m), Tor Hotung-Davidsen (800m)

and Colin Sahlman (1600m). Rheinhardt was tasked with setting the tone and putting our team in contention. Not only did he put us in contention, but he also blew the race wide open and tore apart most of the field and handed off the baton in first place. During Rheinhardt's relay leg, I was standing close to Colin who was patiently watching his teammate do his job. He looked at me and no words were exchanged but simply a confident nod from Colin, telling me exactly what he was going to do.

Josiah took the baton from Rheinhardt and held off all other challengers to hand off still in the lead. Tor received the baton with three other teams close behind and continued to run bravely from the front and handed off the baton to Colin, who surged to the lead with only eight laps standing between him and our first-ever national title in the coveted distance medley relay. With two laps to go and the best NCAA teams running right behind him, Colin poured on the speed and strongly pulled away as the finish line drew closer. Raw emotion and uncontrollable joy released from Colin with 50 meters to the finish as he pumped his fists and enjoyed every second of coming into the finish line securing a NCAA national title.

The joy, laughter, crying, hugging,

screaming and celebrating poured out of all of us. Proudly, displaying "NAU" across our chests and knowing we put together the very best relay team in the entire NCAA. I'll never forget the moments of those four guys jumping into each other's arms and celebrating a true team effort that represents what our team and university is all about.

Colin went on to win the 3000m just 24 hours later. I'll forever be proud of his brave decision not to run an event that he was the collegiate record holder in to prioritize running a relay for his team. His courage and belief in his teammates and himself not only helped lead them to victory, but it also helped him win an individual national title in an event in which he was not favored.

What is possible when you truly experience a great loyalty and love of team and connection?

Anything is possible. **JARRED CORNFIELD IS THE DIRECTOR AND HEAD COACH OF THE NAU MEN'S AND WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY AND TRACK AND FIELD PROGRAMS. HE LOVES LIVING IN FLAGSTAFF WITH HIS WONDERFUL WIFE AND THEIR FOUR CHILDREN.**

**RACHEL SMITH IS A MOM OF TWO AMAZING DAUGHTERS, A PROFESSIONAL RUNNER AND THE COORDINATING EDITOR OF THIS COLUMN. SHE WOULD LOVE FOR YOU TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COLUMN AND SHARE YOUR RUNNING-RELATED STORY BY EMAILING HER AT RACHSCHNEID18@GMAIL.COM.**

## LOCAL

FROM PAGE B1

while senior August Fahy and freshman Dylan Harman each moved their singles records to 5-1.

Fahy and junior Aaron Kirk earned an 8-0 victory at the top doubles spot against juniors Adam Larson and Will Sanderson, Flagstaff's lone point in doubles against Mingus Union. Harman and Carlson fell 8-4 to junior Eamon Hughes and sophomore Julian Chavez Smart at No. 2 in doubles while the Eagles forfeited at No. 3.

In singles, Fahy recorded his third 6-0, 6-0 victory in six tries this season as he defeated Sanderson. Harman's 6-0, 6-2 victory against Larson was his first match at No. 2 this season after playing at No. 3 on Tuesday against Deer Valley and at No. 4 against BASIS Flagstaff on March 20. Carlson's 7-5, 6-3 victory against Hughes was his first appearance at No. 4 this season.

The tightest match of the day came at No. 3 as junior Aaron Kirk battled with Chavez Smart and won in three sets. After Kirk took the first set 6-3, Chavez Smart forced a deciding third-set tiebreaker with a 7-5 win in the second set. The deciding set was Kirk's first of the season after all four of his singles matches had been decided in straight sets this season.

Flagstaff will travel south on Tuesday to face

the Cactus Shadows Falcons before hosting the Bradshaw Mountain Bears on Thursday at Thorpe Park. Both matches are scheduled to begin at 3:30 p.m.

### Yetis 7, Bears 2

Traveling to Prescott Valley for a match against No. 57 Bradshaw Mountain on Wednesday, No. 27 BASIS Flagstaff earned its first win of the season thanks to a sweep of doubles play.

Senior Kyler Choi and sophomore Karis Lee beat sophomores Joseph Holtzman and Bracken Kleinman 8-1 at the top doubles spot. Junior Aaron Ferguson and freshman Olin Zarkou also cruised in their match at No. 2, beating junior Cody Stapley and sophomore Landen Bloom 8-3. Sophomores Phillip Guyer and Shang Fang completed the sweep of doubles with their 8-6 win at No. 3 against sophomores Kaleb Bennion and Micah Steverson.

Lee and Choi each earned wins at the top of the singles order, with the former beating Kleinman 6-0, 6-2 at No. 1 and the latter winning 6-1, 6-2 against Bloom at No. 2. Guyer earned a 6-2, 6-2 win against Bennion on court five while Fang rounded out the wins for BASIS Flagstaff with a 6-0, 6-3 victory against Steverson at No. 6.

The Yetis head south to face the Great Hearts Anthem Eagles at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday.

### Girls tennis

#### Spartans 5, Eagles 4

A little more than a week after losing to No. 14 Great Hearts Anthem (3-2, 2-1 D-III Section VI) in its season opener, No. 25 Northland Prep (2-1, 2-1 D-III Section VI) earned a win in its home opener at the Northern Arizona University Tennis Center on Thursday.

Two victories in doubles play helped push the Spartans to victory. Juniors Kylie Cook and Sophia Shneyderman beat junior Adalynn Frye and Amizhthene Thirumaran 8-5 at No. 1, while freshmen Kellen Nordvedt and Nawang Tamang won 8-6 against seniors Yinuo Hsieh and Haley Mulleneaux at No. 3.

Cook finished the match with two victories as she also defeated Frye 6-4, 6-2 at No. 3 in singles. Freshman Calliope Hill earned her third victory in as many matches at No. 1 with a 6-2, 6-1 win against Thirumaran. Freshman Rosa Paossi rounded out the wins with a 6-4, 6-0 victory against junior Anya Niemi at No. 6.

Shneyderman nearly finished with a second victory on the day as well, falling to senior Brighton Pillsbury 6-4, 1-6, 11-9 at No. 2 in singles.

Northland Prep will face the Flagstaff Eagles at 3:30 p.m. on Monday at Thorpe Park.

#### Falcons 9, Panthers 0

Falling to No. 8 Cactus Shadows (6-0, 2-0

D-II Section II), No. 35 Coconino (3-3, 0-2 D-II, Section II) lost its second consecutive match on its home court Thursday.

The Panthers did not win a set during singles play, with the closest match coming at No. 5, where senior Ava Crum fell to senior Talia Garcia 6-2, 6-4. In doubles, seniors Sofia Doe and Emerson Householder nearly earned a victory at No. 3 but fell to Garcia and junior Eva Peterson 8-6.

Coconino will head to Scottsdale on Tuesday for a 3:30 p.m. match against the Horizon Huskies.

### Boys volleyball

#### Roadrunners 3, Yetis 1

Playing for the first time in nearly three weeks, BASIS Flagstaff lost 27-25, 21-25, 25-20, 25-13 to San Tan Charter on Wednesday afternoon.

After playing three matches since their season began on March 2, the Yetis will have a back-to-back to begin next week. BASIS Flagstaff will be on the road Monday against the ALA West Foothills Guardians before hosting the ALA Mesa North Mavericks at 4 p.m. on Tuesday.

### Beach volleyball

#### Crusaders 5, Panthers 0

Taking on the top team in Division II, No. 23 Coconino (3-5, 1-2 D-II Grand Canyon)

fell to No. 1 Northwest Christian (7-0, 2-0 D-II Grand Canyon) at the Victory Lane Complex in Glendale on Wednesday.

Coconino forced two matches into third sets while falling just short in straight sets in another match as well.

The threes pair of senior Eva Wilke and freshman Brynlee Reber produced the tightest match of the day after a tough start against juniors Brinley Witt and Ava Parsons. Losing 21-8 to open the match, Wilke and Reber earned a 21-18 victory in the second set to force a third. Going into additional points, the Panthers' duo fell just short with a 17-15 loss.

At the top flight, junior Lucie Whiting and freshman Carly Wixom opened their match with a 23-21 win against sophomores Julia Verver and Avery Gentry before just missing the chance to clinch the point in the second set. After Northwest Christian's pair won 21-19 in the second set, the Crusaders won 15-6 in the third.

Coconino's fives pair of sophomore Molly Clifton and freshman Dot Fox just missed forcing a third set in their match as they lost to junior Lucy Strohschein and freshman Reese Gentry 21-19, 21-18.

The Panthers will return to the Victory Lane Complex on Monday as they take on the

North Valley Christian Lions at 4 p.m. Coconino will play four of its final five matches this season at home beginning with the Cactus Shadows Falcons on Wednesday at 3 p.m.

### Baseball

#### Badgers 8, Panthers 2

Suffering a second loss to Prescott (7-1, 4-0 4A Grand Canyon) in three days, Coconino (5-4, 1-3 4A Grand Canyon) lost its third consecutive game overall on Thursday afternoon.

The Badgers jumped ahead with three runs in the first inning and another two in the second before the Panthers broke free for their first of the game in the third inning. Prescott extended its lead to 8-1 in the fifth before Coconino added the final run of the game in the sixth.

Senior Junior Stone finished the game 2 for 3 with two doubles, a RBI and a run scored while junior Jackson Clouse tripled for his lone hit of the game. On the mound, senior Fitz Guinan allowed three runs, two earned, in his five innings of work. Striking out three, Guinan allowed six hits and no walks in relief.

Coconino will travel to Bullhead City on Monday to face the Mohave Thunderbirds at 3:45 p.m. before the teams meet again in Flagstaff on Thursday at 4 p.m.