

# 2008 BIG WEST CROSS COUNTRY



Big West Conference - 2 Corporate Park, Suite 206, Irvine, CA 92606

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## Awards Release - Thursday, November 6, 2008

### Cal Poly, UCR Claim Multiple Big West Cross Country Awards

**IRVINE, CALIF.** – Cal Poly and UC Riverside saw their stellar seasons continue to get recognition today as the Mustangs claimed three major Big West cross country awards, while the Highlanders claimed two individual honors.

The 19th-ranked Cal Poly men's team saw **Daniel Gonia** named Men's Athlete of the Year, **Brienna Morris** claim the Women's Freshman of the Year award and **Mark Conover** claim another Men's Coach of the Year honor. The Highlanders picked up the Men's Freshman of the Year in **Chad Hall** and the Women's Coach of the Year in **Irv Ray**. UC Santa Barbara claimed the lone remaining award as **Danielle Domenichelli** was honored as the Women's Athlete of the Year.

Gonia, a junior from El Cajon, Calif., led Cal Poly its its conference-record sixth straight conference championship and marks the third consecutive season that Cal Poly has claimed the Men's Athlete of the Year honor. The two time Athlete of the Week ran a career-best 24:02.4 to claim the Big West individual crown, the top time in the conference in 2008. He also had an excellent effort at the NCAA Pre-National meet with a time of 24:18.9, good for 38th place in the 41-team field.

Domenichelli, a senior from El Dorado Hills, Calif., continued the strong tradition of UCSB runners with her award, marking the sixth occasion in the last eight years a Gaucho has claimed the Women's Athlete of the Year honor. She was the Big West individual champion after completing the 6K course in 20:09.40, the top time in the Big West this season. Domenichelli also had a stellar effort at the Pre-National meet, crossing the finish line before any other Big West competitor in 20:58.2 and won two conference Athlete of the Week honors.

Hall, a native of Big Bear, Calif., had a big impact on the UCR program in his first year of competition. Hall is not only the first Highlander to ever win a major Big West cross country award, but also is the first non-Cal Poly runner to win Men's Freshman of the Year accolades. At the UCR Invitational, he blazed to a 24:04.9 finish, setting the school and course record. The two-time Big West Athlete of the Week also finished 11th at the conference meet, finishing the race in 24:50.6.

Morris, who hails from Quartz Hill, Calif., becomes the second Cal Poly runner in four years to win the Women's Freshman of the Year award. She was the top freshman finisher at the Big West Championships, completing the course in 21:03.3 for a 14th place finish. A consistent runner for the Mustangs all season, Morris also finished second at the Cal Poly Invitational and 60th in the highly competitive Stanford Invitational.

Conover piloted the Cal Poly program to a conference-record sixth conference championship on the way to his seventh Coach of the Year honor. The seven awards on the men's side tie him for the most in conference history with current UC Irvine head coach Vince O'Boyle. This season, Conover has the Mustangs ranked #19 in the latest national poll after winning the Big West Championship. The club also recorded a seventh place finish at the NCAA Pre-Nationals and a fifth place showing as the Bill Dellinger Invitational in Oregon.

Ray led the UC Riverside program to new heights in just its eighth year of Division I membership. After finishing last in the women's race at the conference meet as recently as 2004, the Highlanders claimed their first Big West cross country championship this season. Ray's club had two top-10 finishers at the conference meet in Cristina Olivas and Brenda Martinez, achieved its highest regional ranking ever (#5) and received votes in the national poll for the first time in the history of the program.

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**2008 Men's Athlete of the Year** - Daniel Gonia, Cal Poly  
**2008 Men's Freshman of the Year** - Chad Hall, UC Riverside  
**2008 Men's Coach of the Year** - Mark Conover, Cal Poly  
**2008 Women's Athlete of the Year** - Danielle Domenichelli, UC Santa Barbara  
**2008 Women's Freshman of the Year** - Brienna Morris, Cal Poly  
**2008 Women's Coach of the Year** - Irv Ray, UC Riverside