

2009 BIG WEST CROSS COUNTRY



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

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Cal Poly Reaps Three Major Cross Country Awards

IRVINE, CALIF. – Cal Poly was the recipient of the most 2009 Big West Cross Country awards as the Mustangs claimed three of the six major honors.

The Cal Poly men's team claimed two of those accolades as **Joe Gatel** was named the Men's Athlete of the Year, while head coach **Mark Conover** was once again bestowed the honor of Men's Coach of the Year. The Mustangs' remaining award was on the women's side as **Kayleigh Tyerman** claimed the Women's Freshman of the Year accolade. No other school received more than one award as UC Davis' **Sarah Sumpter** claimed Women's Athlete of the Year, UC Riverside's **Emmanuel Ngala** earned Men's Freshman of the Year and UC Santa Barbara's **Pete Dolan** claimed the Women's Coach of the Year honor.

Gatel, a senior from Huntington Beach, Calif., became the fourth consecutive Cal Poly runner to claim the Athlete of the Year honor. He is enjoying a stellar senior season which includes results like a 21st place finish in 24:10 at the Bill Dellinger Invitational and a 30th place finish in 24:25 in the Blue Race at Pre-Nationals. Gatel wrapped up his final go-round at the Big West Championships last weekend by leading the Mustangs to their seventh-straight team title, finishing first individually with the best 8K time in the league this season (23:36.8).

Sumpter, a freshman from Cloverdale, Calif., steadily improved all season in becoming the top runner for the Aggies. After redshirting the 2008 cross country season, Sumpter came on strong in the stretch run for UCD, highlighted by a 15th place finish in 21:21.9 in the Blue Race of Pre-Nationals and her individual title at the conference meet in a 6K league-best 20:34.0. Sumpter's individual title at the Big West Championships and selection as the Women's Athlete of the Year mark just the second occasion that a freshman has taken both accolades in a season (1997 - Melinda Campbell, Boise State).

Ngala, a native of Moreno Valley, Calif., was impressive in his first campaign in a Highlander uniform. Among his highlights during the season was a time of 24:33 at the UCR Invitational and his ninth place finish, tops among freshmen, at the Big West Championships in 24:24.3. Ngala was also a consistent runner for Irv Ray's UCR club, finishing second on the squad in every race he entered.

Tyerman, a native of Central Point, Ore., made her presence felt in her true freshman season with the Mustangs. She won three of the first four Athlete of the Week awards, the first freshman to win a weekly honor since Long Beach State's Jennifer Rodriguez in 2006. Tyerman also became the first freshman to win multiple weekly awards since the conference started the weekly honors in 2001. She currently has the second-best 6K time in the league after finishing second at the Conference Championships last weekend in 20:35.4.

Conover piloted the Cal Poly program to a conference-record seventh conference championship on the way to his eighth Men's Coach of the Year honor. The eight awards on the men's side moves Conover past current UC Irvine head coach Vince O'Boyle for the most men's coaching honors in league history. This season, Conover led the Mustangs to a national ranking for most of the season and saw one of his men's athletes win the individual race at the Big West Championships for the fourth consecutive season.

Dolan led his Gaucho women's team back to the top of the Big West after a one-year hiatus, the team's fifth crown in the last seven years. He oversaw a team that had the individual winner of the women's 6K race at the league meet for the fourth consecutive season and for the seventh time in the last nine years. Dolan also won the Women's Coach of the Year honor for the seventh time overall and fifth time in the previous seven seasons. His seven overall titles are second to current UC Irvine coach Vince O'Boyle who has 10 career coaching awards.

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2009 Men's Athlete of the Year - Joe Gatel, Cal Poly
2009 Men's Freshman of the Year - Emmanuel Ngala, UC Riverside
2009 Men's Coach of the Year - Mark Conover, Cal Poly
2009 Women's Athlete of the Year - Sarah Sumpter, UC Davis
2009 Women's Freshman of the Year - Kayleigh Tyerman, Cal Poly
2009 Women's Coach of the Year - Pete Dolan, UC Santa Barbara