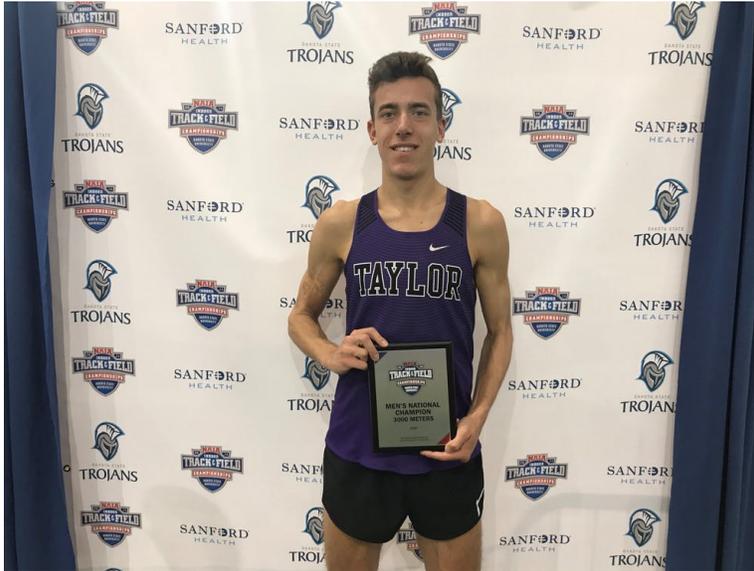


Taylor's sole National Champion in 2019-20

Josh Roth discusses his rise to a title-winning distance runner

By MARKUS MILLER



Josh Roth won the 3,000-meter race at the NAIA Indoor National Championships.

Women's basketball and soccer broke program records. Cross country, both men's and women's, made nationals. Men's and women's golf both consistently placed in the NAIA Top 25 polls, with the women's team spending much of their season in the top 5. Senior Mason Degenkolb brought the national spotlight to the men's basketball program after his full-court shot.

Amidst all those moments, Taylor won a national title.

Junior Josh Roth, a distance runner, picked up a personal record, three-second victory and a championship in the 3,000-meter race in the 2020 NAIA Indoor National Championships.

Roth, who picked up competitive running in 7th grade, couldn't have known he would have ever been a national champion.

"I didn't even know if I wanted to compete in college," he said.

Roth's competitive nature is part of what helped mold him from a middle schooler who enjoyed running, to a Trojan who dominates in running.

Anyone who saw his impressive finish in the 3,000 can attest to that.

"Josh has a genuine conviction that he can run with the best," said Interim Track and Field Head Coach Quinn White. "He goes into races with the expectation that he's going to win. He races smart and can run with anybody."

Roth's dad was also a jarhead, the nickname given to the Taylor men's cross country runners.

His dad's love for running helped Roth get started in a sport he quickly discovered he could have a future in.

"I played basketball really early," Roth said. "Near the end of junior high was when I started to get better at running. I could see myself progressing further in running."

That progression ultimately led to a successful high school career, where he finished No. 16 in the Indiana State Cross Country Championships and No. 5 in 4x800 meter relay at the state track meet.

Roth heard the stories and saw the traditions his dad had with the jarheads and combined with his love for running, made the decision to attend Taylor.

“The best part of (my career at Taylor) is definitely the relationships,” Roth said. “There’s no egos. Everyone is cheering for you. I just love competing and I love the team.”

Roth came in and instantly made an impact on both the cross country and track and field teams his freshman year. In cross country he finished No. 15 in the Crossroads League Championships and earned All-Crossroads League honors. He earned the same award in track after finishing No. 3 in the 5,000-meter race.

He continued his ascent during his sophomore year. He set two indoor Crossroads League Championship records and set a Taylor program record in the outdoor 10,000-meters. He led the Trojans at nationals in cross country with a 38th-place finish.

Still, one thing evaded him.

“My main goal was to win a national championship at some point in my career,” Roth said.

He finally achieved it this year. His 8:25.70 performance in the 3,000-meter broke records and was another moment in his ascent as an elite runner.

Now, with the 2020 outdoor season canceled due to COVID-19, Roth has to set his sights on his senior and final season.

“It’s really motivating,” Roth said. “With my biggest goal out of the way, it’s just a matter of doing it again, winning another one.”

The Taylor men’s track and field program has been on the verge of Crossroads championships in both the indoor and outdoor season for much of this past decade but has yet to win one.

Roth is hoping he can help change that.

“I’m excited to take this on,” Roth said. “We’re looking to win a conference championship.”

If his rise from a middle and high schooler who was unsure about running in college, to All-Crossroads League distance performer, to national champion is any indication, Roth’s senior year could have even more in store.

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