

FULL SPEED AHEAD

After a stellar debut, Isaiah Harris maintains his blistering pace as a sophomore

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QUICK SILVER
Harris (center) finished second in the 800 at NCAAs. Photo by Rhianna Gelhart

A year ago, as a freshman, Isaiah Harris put together one of the more decorated seasons in Penn State track and field history. He won indoor and outdoor Big Ten titles in the 800 meters, finished fourth in the event at the NCAA championships and made the final of the 800 meters at the U.S. Olympic trials, finishing sixth.

So heading into his sophomore season, Harris felt pressure to succeed.

“Sometimes it’s really hard when you have a really good year to come back and do it again,” he said. “A lot of people, you know, have a slump year or something like that. I was just trying to not let that happen.”

He achieved his goal.

Harris finished second at the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships at the University of Oregon on June 9, capping a sophomore season in which he briefly had the top 800-meter time in the NCAA (1 minute, 45.12 seconds), won two

more Big Ten titles, broke the world record in the 600-meter run (he finished second behind former Penn

State middle-distance star Casimir Loxsom, who officially holds the record, at the Penn State National in January) and helped the Nittany Lions to the Big Ten outdoor title, the first in the program’s history.

“I really focused on doing all the little things in practice and just pushing myself to be better than I was last year,” Harris said.

The only person ahead of him in the rankings heading into the NCAA championships was UTEP freshman Emmanuel Korir, who ran a personal-best time of 1:43.73 just one week after Harris had claimed the top time in the nation.

Neither Harris nor Penn State coach John Gondak was exactly sure what to expect in the final. Said Gondak, “We talked about being at the right place at the right time.”

Harris put himself there. Coming around the third turn on the final lap of

TRACK & FIELD

Nittany Lions 20th at NCAA championships

Penn State earned its third consecutive top-20 finish at the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships, as the men’s team tied Southern Cal for 20th overall. The Nittany Lions were 10th in 2015 and 17th last season.

“This was another great weekend for Penn State track and field,” head coach John Gondak said. “I think the kids came and competed well. We had a lot of people come and finish with personal bests. This meet left us a little hungry, we’ve been on fire since our meet at [Virginia] in the middle of April, and we carried it through the Big Ten championships and

a phenomenal regional meet, advancing 15 men to the championships this weekend.”

Isaiah Harris, claimed outdoor All-America honors for the second time in his career, finishing second in the 800 meters. Also earning All-America honors were throwers David Lucas (discus) and Michael Shuey (javelin).

The Penn State women finished in a tie with Mississippi and Harvard for 29th place. Dannielle Gibson (triple jump) and Tori Gerlach (3,000-meter steeplechase) won All-America recognition. ■

the 800, Korir and his UTEP teammate Michael Saruni were battling for first place, and then suddenly Korir accidentally tripped Saruni. Saruni then stumbled onto the track and went from first to last place.

"The position [Harris] was in when the UTEP guys tripped each other was the right place at the right time," Gondak said. "It kind of cleared an open path for him to move to the front and to be able to challenge for the win."

Said Harris, "I saw an opening, and I thought this must be opening for a reason!"

Harris, who generally starts races toward the middle of the pack and gets stronger as he goes on, made a push for first place, but it was too late. Korir had already established enough of a lead down the homestretch.

"I'm confident in my speed," Harris said. "But he's also super-fast. I did believe in myself, but I just didn't have it."

Korir won in 1:45.03, with Harris just behind in 1:45.40.

"I really wanted that win," Harris said. "But I'm happy with second."

He maintained his momentum at the USATF championships two weeks later in Sacramento, Calif., turning in a personal-best time of 1:44.53 to finish second behind Nike-affiliated runner Donovan Brazier. Harris's reward: a trip to London for the world championships. The preliminaries in the 800 are set for Aug. 5. ■

NOTEBOOK

WOMEN'S LACROSSE

Nittany Lions third in final coaches poll

On the heels of its second consecutive run to the NCAA semifinals, Penn State finished the season ranked third in the final IWLCA Division I coaches poll.

Eventual national champion Maryland defeated the Nittany Lions, 20-10, May 26 in Foxborough, Mass. Penn State finished its season with a 17-4 overall record. Its 17 victories were tied for the second-most in the program's history and were the most wins in a single season since it went 19-1 in 1989.

Penn State received 334 points from the 20-member voting panel, eight points more than Stony Brook, which finished the season ranked fourth. The Terrapins were a unanimous No. 1 selection after finishing the season 23-0 and winning their 14th national title, while Boston College concluded the season ranked No. 2 after entering the tournament unranked. The Eagles dropped a 16-13 decision to the Terps in the title game and finished the season at 17-7. Defending national champion North Carolina rounded out the top five after a 17-3 season.

Led by a trio of IWLCA All-Americans and five All-Big Ten selections, Penn State set single-season records for points (427) and goals (303) in 2017. Senior Steph Lazo led the Big Ten in points

(89) and assists (43) and was named Penn State's first first-team All-American in 13 years.

Sophomore Madison Carter, a second-team All-American, finished second in the Big Ten and 10th in the nation with 70 goals. She became only the fourth Nittany Lion to register 70 or more goals in a season and the first since Tami Worley in 1989.

MEN'S GOLF

PSU finishes 24th at NCAA tournament

Penn State advanced four more positions during the last day of the NCAA championships, shooting an 8-over 296

on May 28 at Rich Harvest Farms in Sugar Grove, Ill.

The Nittany Lions were the lowest-seeded squad in the 30-team NCAA field, and the No. 48 overall seed heading into NCAA regionals, and tied Lipscomb for 24th place to finish ahead of five higher-seeded teams. The Nittany Lions finished with a 27-over 891 over the three rounds.

All five of Penn State's NCAA championship participants are slated to return for the 2017-18 season (one junior, two sophomores, two freshmen).

Freshman Ryan Davis led the Nittany Lions on the final day of the tournament with his second consecutive 1-under 71. Davis, who posted four birdies on day three, led the team with a three-round score of 2-over 218 (76-71-71). ■

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