

Catching Up With Georgia Cross Country's Kristin Heffelfinger

Courtesy: UGA Sports Communications

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Kristin Heffelfinger, the 2003 Southeastern Conference Freshman of the Year in cross country, recently helped propel the Georgia women to a No. 20 national ranking in the U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) poll. Heffelfinger, who is now a graduate student at UGA, took 17th overall at the NCAA Pre-Nationals Invitational (Terre Haute, Ind.) on Oct. 14. Her 6K time of 20:38 at the meet was the Third-fastest time in the SEC this season.

A Walton High School graduate, Heffelfinger is now preparing for the SEC Championships (Baton Rouge, La.) on Oct. 28 and is hoping to have another strong outing in Terre Haute at the 2006 NCAA Championships on Nov. 20.

Here's what Heffelfinger had to say when georgiadogs.com caught up with her:

On what enabled her to have her recent success at Pre-Nationals: "Two factors really helped me out at Pre-Nationals. First, Coach (Dave) Hartman gave me some great advice before the race; he told me to use the up-hills to pass people and move up during the race. Second, and more importantly, I spent the whole race in close proximity of my teammate, Jill (Steffens, who finished 19th with a time of 20:39.4). During Pre-Nationals, we felt like we really encouraged each other the whole race."

On how she feels the women's team is doing this year through its first four meets: "This year's team has been doing incredibly well. We began the year with some specific, challenging goals, and I think that we are striving towards them and realizing that we are capable of attaining and possibly exceeding them. Coach Hartman has been doing an excellent job of keeping us healthy and injury-free this year, which I think has really made a difference in our training and our attitudes."

On what her goals, both individually and as a team, are for the remainder of the 2006 season: "For me, the two aren't really separate. Because the team standings in cross country meets are based on the fewest numbers of points scored by the top five runners, I want to perform as best I can so that I can be a low-scorer for the team. I've got a goal in mind of what 'low-scoring' area I'd like to be in, and I'm just going to run my heart out and try to attain that."

On what she is doing right now in graduate school: "I am in bit of a transitional phase right now. This semester, I studied English literature, but I realized that even though I love the UGA English department, I don't really have an enormous passion for literature. I'm switching to historic preservation for the spring semester, and I'll spend the next three years studying that."

On what her future plans on the cross country trails and beyond are: "Athletically, I'd really like to train for the marathon and try to make the Olympic trials in 2012. I also spent part of the summer working at an Athletes in Action program in Saalfelden, Austria, so I'd like to go back there for a while. As far as jobs are concerned, I'm waiting to see exactly what my strengths in historic preservation will be, but if they took me to a location that had forests, mountains and great architecture, I wouldn't be opposed!"

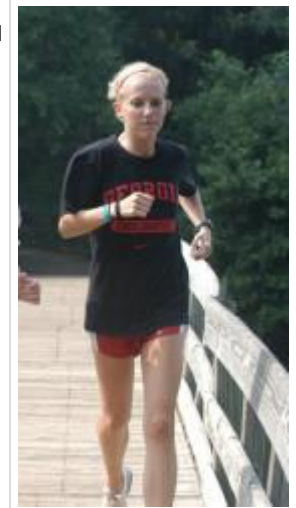


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Kristin Heffelfinger