

## This report is from Running USA

Since 2001, U.S. distance running has produced some noteworthy and historic achievements, particularly compared to its status the years before 2001, and 2008 was another year of achievement and outside powerhouses Kenya and Ethiopia, no country had a better year than the USA if one considers the entire sport. In 2008, U.S. distance runners had success on the track, on the roads, up and down mountains and over trails and turf. There was some disappointment in the U.S. distance performances at the Beijing Olympics, but when only one bronze medal is considered a "disappointment" than certainly the bar and expectations have been raised since 2001 and those are good things for the sports further development.

Below are the 10 best moments in U.S. distance running for the year:

#10

**Yoder Begley Gets Olympic "A" Standard at Olympic Trials and Beijing Berth**  
At the Olympic Trials, on Friday, June 27, Amy Yoder Begley willed her way to a personal record 31:43.60 for the coveted third place spot. Moreover, a big negative split of 16:10 vs. 15:33 (and propelled by the Eugene crowd), the Arkansas grad earned the Olympic "A" standard by 1.4 seconds and a trip to China.

#9

**Jurek Three-Peats at the Spartathlon Ultra**  
Last September, ultra star Scott Jurek became the first man to win three consecutive times the storied Spartathlon endurance race in Greece. The Seattle resident traversed the grueling 152.8 mile / 246K course from Athens to Sparta in 22 hours, 20 minutes, 1 second, the fifth fastest race time (and his best time); only ultra legend Yiannis Kouros has run faster at the event.

#8

**U.S. Women's Steeplechase Record Chase by Barringer and Willard**  
During 2008, U.S. steeplechasers Jenny Barringer and Anna Willard had a record duel, and at the KBC Night of Athletics meet in July, Barringer edged Willard, 9:22.73 to 9:22.76, to shatter Willard's U.S. record (9:27.59) set at the Olympic Trials. Later in Beijing, Barringer, a Colorado University student in Boulder, reset the U.S. record with her 9:22.26 at the Olympic steeplechase final where she finished 9th (Willard was 10th).

#7

**Kastor's Late Charge Captures Olympic Marathon Trials**  
At the U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials in Boston on April 20, U.S. record holder and 2004 Olympic bronze medalist Deena Kastor of Mammoth Lakes, Calif. became a three-time Olympian with a negative split, comeback win in 2:29:35 (second fastest women's Trials performance). Magdalena Lewy Boulet, who led until the 23rd mile, earned the second Beijing berth as runner-up in 2:30:19 (a personal record), while 2004 OMT 4th place finisher Blake Russell nabbed the coveted third Olympic spot with a controlled 2:32:40. An impressive 14 of the top 16 set personal records over the

multi-loop course in downtown Boston.

#6

Goucher Breaks U.S. Debut Record at ING New York City Marathon

On November 2, Kara Goucher, with her 2:25:53 at New York to finish third behind defending champion Paula Radcliffe and master Ludmila Petrova, broke Deena Kastor's U.S. marathon debut record of 2:26:58 from 2001 New York City. Goucher, a 2008 Olympian, also became the third fastest U.S. woman behind Kastor and Joan Benoit Samuelson.

#5

California State Meet Wows with National and State 1600 & 3200 Meter Records

At the California CIF State Track Meet on May 31, Christine Babcock and German Fernandez, with impressive solo efforts, set national scholastic records at 1600 and 3200 meters, 4:33.82 and 8:34.23, respectively. Two hours earlier, Fernandez broke the 1600-meter state meet record with his solo 4:00.29 (a 4:01.7 mile equivalent). Many in the sport consider his distance double the best ever in U.S. boys high school track history. Also, if that wasn't enough, in the girls 3200 meters, Jordan Hasay and Laurynne Chetelat pushed each other for 8 laps with Hasay just edging Chetelat, 9:52.13 to 9:52.51 -- both under the old state meet record and the #2 and #3 H.S. performances all-time. Wow.

#4

Flanagan Shatters U.S. 10,000m Record at Cardinal Invite

On May 4 at Stanford University, Shalane Flanagan, 26, demolished the U.S. and U.S. All-Comers 10,000 meter record with a 30:34.49 clocking - in her debut at the distance. The old U.S. mark, also set on the same track, was 2004 Olympic medalist Deena Kastor's 30:50.32 from 2002. Flanagan, who also holds the U.S. 5000m record, and New Zealand's Kim Smith raced around the track together before Flanagan of Pittsboro, N.C. pulled away at the end. Smith set an NZL/Oceania record with her 30:35.54, and ten women ran under the 2008 Olympic Games "A" standard of 31:45.

#3

Ritzenhein, Hall 9th and 10th in the Olympic Marathon

Under less than ideal conditions for 26.2 miles, Dathan Ritzenhein and Ryan Hall finished 9th (2:11:59) and 10th (2:12:33) at the Olympic Marathon in Beijing. Sammy Wanjiru of Kenyan ran an otherworldly Olympic record 2:06:32 in the heat and humidity. Historically, Ritzenhein and Hall also produced the 4th and 6th fastest Olympic Marathon times by the U.S, and in the modern era, it was the second best U.S. men's team by place total with 41 points (9 + 10 + 22 - Brian Sell) behind the 1972 team of Frank Shorter, Kenny Moore and Jack Bachelier (1 + 4 + 9 = 14).

#2

Hall Pops 2:06:17 Marathon at London - #2 U.S. performer all-time

At the Flora London Marathon on April 13 against a stellar field, Ryan Hall of Mammoth Lakes, Calif. ran another impressive marathon to finish 5th in 2:06:17, only

former course and world record holder Khalid Khannouchi has run faster (twice) as an American. In his third marathon, the Team Running USA athlete continued his development as he prepped for the Beijing Olympics. The top six men broke 2:07, the first time that has ever happened at the same marathon on the same day. Winner Martin Lel of Kenya defended his London title with a course record 2:05:15.

#1

Flanagan Earns Olympic 10,000 meter Bronze Medal and AR at Beijing

At the Beijing Olympics on August 15, Shalane Flanagan won the bronze medal in 30:22.22, shattering her own U.S. record and equaling the best-ever U.S. women's performance in the event. Earlier in the week, the 2004 Olympian had suffered from food poisoning. Flanagan's hardware was the first American track medal, male or female, at a distance longer than 400 meters since Lynn Jennings' bronze in Barcelona 1992, which was also a U.S. record at the time. Tirunesh Dibaba (ETH) and Elvan Abeylegesse (TUR) won the gold and silver medals with impressive times under 30 minutes, 29:54.66 and 29:56.34, respectively.