

USATF Mountain Runners of the Year 2001

On Friday, November 30, the 2001 USATF Mountain Runner of the Year awards were presented in Mobile, Alabama during a breakfast banquet. The celebration is part of the USATF annual convention and will honor athletes and coaches in various disciplines within USA Track & Field.

The USATF Mountain Runner of the Year award recipients for 2001 are Eric Morse, Berlin, VT and Kari DiStefano, Telluride, CO.

Morse was crowned the 2001 USATF New England mountain running circuit champion after winning four of the five circuit races setting a course record at the Mt. Ascutney event. He posted an additional win at the highly competitive Mountain Athletics Trail Running Challenge series final at Mt. Snow, Vermont and finished fourth at the Mt. Washington Hill Climb. Morse was named to the US Mountain Running Team, but was unable to run at the World Mountain Running Trophy event due to airport closings. In addition to his mountain running prowess, Morse is a perennial favorite on the roads and cross country courses. Morse finished third in the USATF New England Grand Prix, a seven-race circuit from 5 Km to Marathon. Morse has also run under four minutes for the mile. The 35-year-old is a draftsman, creating headstones in Montpelier, Vermont.

DiStefano finished second at the Barr Trail Mountain Race, one of two selection races for the US Mountain Running Team. However, only the top female finisher from Barr Trail earned a guaranteed slot on the team. DiStefano settled for an alternate position on the four-member squad. After events on September 11 forced several of the team to remain in the United States, DiStefano was elevated to full team status. Rising to the challenge, the 42-year-old mother of three led the U.S. team with an outstanding 21st place finish at the World Mountain Running Trophy, the top finish by an American woman in the seven years of fielding a woman's team. In her home state, DiStefano posted wins at the Highline 15 Miler, the Arbor Day 10 Km Trail Race, her sixth win at the grueling Imogene Pass Run, a third-place finish at the U.S. Fila SkyMarathon, and fourth at the North American Snowshoe Championships. She demonstrated her tenacity on the roads by finishing second at the Big Sur Marathon. DiStefano works as a mapper for San Miguel County.

This is the third year for the USATF Mountain Runner of the Year awards. Last year's recipients were Dave Dunham and Cindy O'Neill.

Criteria for this year's selection included top results in US mountain/trail competitions and international competitions during 2001, current USATF membership, and serving as an ambassador for the sport.

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