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2004 Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team Junior Squad Announced

The junior members have been selected for the 2004 Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team, which will travel to the renowned Italian ski resort town of Sauze d'Oulx and compete in the grueling 20th World Mountain Running Trophy in early September.

Chosen to represent the United States on the junior men's team are **Andrew Payton**, 18, from **Woodland Park CO**; **John Ricardi**, 17, from **Gardner, MT**; and **Rory Egelus**, 17, **Palmer, AK**. The junior women include **Dominique Colberg, Palmer, AK**; **Amber Harper, Orem, UT**; and **Caitlen (Kit) Ziegler, South Jordan, UT**. Alternates are **Todd Skelton** from **Surgoinsville, TN**, and **Jennifer Hockman** from **Colorado Springs, CO**.



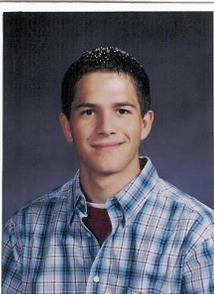
Rory Egelus

The U.S. is fielding a junior team for the third year in a row. The team features both returning and new runners from across the U.S., according to Junior Team Manager Tom Borschel. Athletes must not yet be 20 in the year of competition to compete as juniors.

Sanctioned by the World Mountain Running Association, the junior men's course at the World Trophy is all uphill and will be held on mixed terrain over 8.46 km (5.25 miles) with 826 meters (2,685 feet) of net vertical gain, the same course as the senior women. The junior women will start higher on the course, run 3.57 km (2.25 miles), and climb 447 meters (1,450 feet). Both finish at the same summit. All junior events will be staged on Saturday, September 4, 2004.

The selection committee chose athletes based on road, trail, track, and cross-country results. Since this year's courses are uphill (in odd-numbered years courses are up and down), an important additional consideration was the proven ability to run well on technical, steep uphill courses.

In the junior events at the World Trophy, the top three men of the four-man team are scored by place while the top two women comprise the score for the three-woman team. Junior alternates can run in the open race on Sunday, September 5, or step in to the trophy race the preceding day, replacing one of their team members should they be injured or unable to compete.



Todd Skelton

All applicants were required to submit a running resume, provide a letter of recommendation from their coach, and be a current member of USA Track & Field. The selection committee noted the large number and high quality of applicants this year. The committee also appreciated the time and effort of the many talented

juniors who applied this year and extended their wishes for continued athletic and academic success.

Biographies of team members:



Andrew Payton

Ms. Colberg hails from Palmer, AK, and just completed her freshman year at the University of Montana. She ran the grueling 3,000-m steeplechase for the first time and demonstrated early success and continual improvement. She is a well-seasoned mountain runner with ample opportunity to compete in Alaska and Missoula, MT. She has a personal best of 17:51 for 5 km and recently placed 3rd overall in the Mt. Marathon in Seward, AK, with a 3-minute improvement from last year, breaking an hour for the over 3,000-foot ascent and descent. Also multi talented artist and stellar student, Dominique says, “I feel confident that if given the opportunity to compete for the U. S., I would be well prepared, both physically and mentally. I love the mountains, and I live for competition, so the combination is ideal.” Mark Doner, her cross-country high school coach of four years adds, “Not only is her life governed by a strong character, she is also a ‘character’ with many facets. She is fun and easy to be around and yet she is competitive to the core.”

Returning team member from last year's squad, **Mr. Egelus** enters his senior year at Alaska’s Palmer High School this fall. He is not only a top junior finisher in every local mountain competition he enters, but finishes near the top against the entire race field. He has improved greatly on his backyard uphill time trials this year, which recently resulted in a personal record of 26:35 for the grueling 1,634-foot vertical climb and descent on the famous junior Mt. Marathon course in Seward AK. He is now the impressive Mt. Marathon three-time junior champion (2002, 2003, 2004). Also in 2004, he placed 10th overall at the 3-mile-long 3,400 foot ascent at the Robert Spurr Memorial Hill Climb in Bird Ridge, AK with a time of 44:01 His 5km personal record of 16:18 was set at the Seward Invitational High School cross-country meet in 2003. Egelus says, “I would like to note my dedication and desire to be part of the 2004 Teva Junior Men’s Mountain Running Team. I have put in much time and dedication into my training the last 2 months. I’m very pumped for the big race, this is sweet!” His strong dedication was evident last year when Rory had to choose between representing his country, or his high school team at the region meet on the same day as the WMRT 2003 in AK. Without competing in the region meet, the overall favored runner would not be allowed compete at the state meet the following week. He chose to race against the best junior mountain runners in the world. Cross country coach Gary Howell notes in his glowing recommendation, “Rory has taken up the grueling sport of competitive mountain running and been more successful in this facet of running than any other. His tenacious spirit and relentless hard work are surely going to lead him to the heights he envisioned so long ago.”



Amber Harper

The impressive BYU freshman, **Ms. Harper** hails from Orem, UT, with a close-up view of the towering 11,700-foot Mt Timpanogas out the kitchen window and the single-track Bonneville Shoreline trail rising from her backyard. Amber is a well recognized force in all facets of competitive running with the unprecedented honor of representing the United States at the World Junior Cross Country Meet in Belgium this spring, the World Junior Track and Field Championships in the 3000m steeplechase in Groseletto Italy in mid-July, and now the junior team at the 2004 World Mountain Running Trophy in the Italian Alps. Her list of accomplishments rings includes three-time Utah state high school cross country champion, two-time 3200m state champ, state champ in 1600m, two-time Footlocker National cross country finalist, and Mt. Sac Invitational champ in 3000m. She has big meet experience and has competed very successfully throughout the country and internationally. Her recent BYU seasonal bests are 1500m in 4:33, 3000m steeplechase in 10:21, and an impressive 16:17 effort for a track 5000m at the Cardinal Invitational at Stanford. She is an outstanding student and has followed in the successful footsteps of her parents, Hawk and Cheryl as well as her older brother Golden Harper. The Harper clan has been the cornerstone of running in the Utah valley for over 20 years. Says four-time women’s Olympic Marathon Trials qualifier, Cheryl about her daughter, “Amber is well qualified to compete at an international level and has had several international experiences in track and field as well as cross country.”



Kit Ziegler

The top returning junior men’s team member from last year's squad, **Mr. Payton** graduated from Woodland Park High School this spring following overall improvement during the track season. He ran a high-altitude 34:56 10-km person best this year. His personal records set at altitude include 2:03 for 800m, 4:32 for 1600m, 9:57 for 3200m, and 16:25 for 5km. He lives in mountainous terrain at nearly 9,000 feet in elevation and has ample training terrain similar to the World Mountain Trophy course. Getting a first-hand dose of the level of competition last year will allow Andrew to fully



John Ricardi



Dominique Colberg

understand the preparation necessary to improve this year. Said Payton, "I am excited to make the team again this year and look forward to Italy, the camaraderie, and, of course, racing in the World Championship. I am especially appreciative to TEVA, USTAF, and the selection committee for giving me this opportunity." His coach, Ron Payton says, "He had a wonderful experience at Girdwood, AK, last year and is thrilled at the prospect of running for the Junior Team in Italy. Andrew continues to train on the mountain trails. He often runs by himself and really prefers to do this in the adverse weather conditions of rain and snow." This fall, Payton will be starting his college career at Colorado State University.

Mr. Ricardi comes from the picturesque, Big Sky Country near Gardiner, Montana. He is a member of the talented running family known as the Running Ricardis. John has been training and running in the mountains since a young age, bagging many difficult peaks and has greatly and consistently improved his running times over the many years of competing. A solid altitude indoor 4:27 1600m in finals of Simplot games was run this spring. Personal records include 9:47 for 3200m and 16:04 for the 5k cross-country. He also recently ran a 34:20 in the 4th of July 10km road race at 6,300-ft Jackson Hole, WY. He has an impressive string of age group wins at the 4.2-mile run up the 7.5% grade of famous Beartooth Highway, Red Lodge MT. These wins were in 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003. A proud father, Nick notes, "John is a straight A student and an awesome role model to his peers. He is a true champion, a leader by example, selfless and caring."

Ms. Ziegler is a 17-year-old senior at Bingham High School in South Jordan UT. Caitlen (Kit), on a scorching day last October, blazed through hilly Sugarhouse Park to win the Utah State 5A (large school) cross country title, setting the fastest time of all divisions in the process. As a result, she was selected as the top female cross-country runner in the state for the 2003-2003 seasons. Kit was also noted by *Harrier Magazine* as one of the top 50 high school female runners in the U.S. during the fall XC season. She has competed in numerous USATF Junior National and Junior Olympic National events in cross country and track over her career. She is well traveled and is following in the footsteps of her very successful older twin sisters who now compete for University of Colorado. Her personal bests set at altitude include 5:12 for 1600 m, 11:18 for 3200 m and 18:18 for 5 km cross-country. To prepare for the World Mountain Trophy course, Kit has the backyard of the Wasatch mountains, which offer similar conditions both in grade and elevation at the many fine ski resorts. When informed that she had been chosen for the team, Kit said, "'I am blessed and greatly honored to have the opportunity to represent my country on Teva's US Mountain Running Junior Team." Her summer coaches, Laurie and Kevin Ziegler note, "We believe that Caitlin will be a formidable challenger to runners from other countries where her greatest strength, running up mountains fast, will provide her with a golden opportunity to finish favorably in the Junior Women's race at the 2004 World Mountain Trophy."

Ms. Hockman has been selected as the alternate for the junior women's team and will support them in Italy based on her solid and consistent track and cross country results and especially for her expertise and success at very steep ascent time trials at the base of the nearby and famed Pikes Peak. In addition to her running pursuits, the well-rounded Jennifer is in the International Baccalaureate Diploma program that works with college curriculum and a member of the National Honor Society. Said Jennifer, "I hope to return home from Italy with memorable experiences and new running knowledge to further myself as an athlete. Although I am only the alternate I feel that it is all the more important for me to perform at top notch while representing U.S. in the open race. There were many girls who could have had my spot so I have to prove that I was indeed the right choice for my honorable position as alternate. I have no doubts that it will be a fun and enjoyable time. I am excited to be among such talented company while knowing this unique running experience will be a great step towards having my most successful cross country and track season yet.

Mr Skelton, a senior at Volunteer High School joins the team from Surgoinsville Tennessee. This outdoorsy athlete has set a host of Tennessee state age group records at distance events over his running career, notably the age 16, 10-mile road race in 57:47. Todd's athletic success is nicely complimented by an outstanding academic record, student government involvement, and successful music career. Says Todd, "I am really excited about representing the US at the World Mountain Running Trophy in Italy. It is an honor to receive such an opportunity, and I plan to make the most of it. I look forward to racing some of the world's top junior runners although I know it is going to be a tough race". His uphill running experience is noted by coach Tom Coughenour, "Todd truly loves to run long distance and hills are his favorite. One of Todd's favorite places to run is Bays Mountain Park, which has many hilly trails and is great preparation for mountain running competition".

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Websites of interest:

www.vailrec.com - Teva Spring Runoff and USA Mountain Running Championships

www.wmrt2004.org - World Mountain Running Trophy 2004

www.usatfne.org/trail - USATF New England Mountain Running Website

www.cerritos.edu/lgersitz/MUT/Home.html - USATF Mountain Ultra Trail Running Council

www.wmra.info - World Mountain Running Association