



January 1998

Mules on the Move

Kevin Cool
Colby College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine>

Recommended Citation

Cool, Kevin (1998) "Mules on the Move," *Colby Magazine*: Vol. 87 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine/vol87/iss1/14>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by the Colby College Archives at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colby Magazine by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Colby.



Olympic Mettle

Marc Gilbertson '91 took a year off from teaching and look where it got him—Nagano

By Kevin Cool

Standing in the starting chute preparing to begin the biggest race of his life, nordic skier Marc Gilbertson '91 looked over and saw a cluster of well-wishers waving large, yellow foam "We're No. 1" fingers. A busload of kids from the Vermont school where Gilbertson works had made the trip to Lake Placid, N.Y., hoping to see their favorite social studies teacher realize an improbable dream—to qualify for the Olympics. They shouted, clanged cow bells and generally made as much racket as possible.

"Usually the time just before a race is when you zone in on yourself and really focus on what your body needs to do," Gilbertson said. "But for this race I looked over there [at the crowd] and actually was enjoying the scene. I was very loose and ready to go. I felt like something special was going to happen."

It did.

The 28-year-old social studies teacher surprised the 49-man field, including four members of the U.S. Ski Team, by winning the 30-kilometer race to earn a spot on the Olympic team that will compete in Nagano, Japan.

Despite a successful season and a growing reputation as one of the nation's top distance skiers, Gilbertson was not among those who figured to be selected for the five-man U.S. team. He had never skied in a World Cup race and he was older than skiers considered to be in their prime. If he wanted to go to Nagano, he knew that second place wouldn't be good enough. He had to win.

"It was a four-lap race. I figured I would go out for the first three laps and stay in control



JOHN EWING/PORTLAND NEWSPAPERS

Gilbertson won the Olympic qualifying race in Lake Placid, N.Y., by more than two minutes.

and then put the hammer down," he said.

He was within four seconds of the lead after three laps when he made his move. Split times are announced to the skiers as they pass various points in the course, and when Gilbertson reached the last long downhill section of the race the timer yelled a split time Gilbertson didn't believe. He was a minute and 20 seconds in the lead. "To be honest, I thought he must have screwed up on his math," he said. The timer's math was correct. When Gilbertson crossed the finish line a few moments later, he collapsed gasping from exhaustion and emotion. He was going to Nagano.

It was the culmination of a long-held dream and a well-conceived plan. He had arranged a one-year leave from his teaching job at Lamoille Union High School in Morrisville, Vt., to train for his Olympic attempt.

His performance leading up to the qualifying race at Lake Placid had been excellent—he was the leading money winner on the Yoko/F.I.S. Series, the pre-Olympic circuit for U.S. competitors. "I had never prepared for anything in my life like I prepared for that hour and a half," he said.

Like millions of American children, Gilbertson grew up watching Olympic competition, vicariously sharing the pride when a U.S. gold medalist stood on the winner's platform and listened to the national anthem. "When I got my uniform and saw the big 'U.S.A.' on the back and saw all of the flags people put on my car, that was a special feeling," he said. "I didn't sleep much the first four nights after I won [the qualifying race]. I would wake up and think, 'Holy cow, I'm going to be in the opening ceremonies.'"

Gilbertson's achievement has thrilled his classmates and Colby teachers, including Jim Wescott, who coached him during four seasons of track and cross-country running. "Mark is just a gem," Wescott said. "He is so modest about his accomplishments."

While skiing for Colby, Gilbertson twice qualified for the NCAA Division I national championships and was the Division II champion three times. He says he is going to Nagano expecting to win a medal. "I think I would be selling myself short if I didn't enter the race believing I could win," he said. "All of my skiing career people have been telling me it's impossible to do this or that. A lot of stuff is possible." ♦

Check the Colby Web site for journal submissions by Gilbertson from the Nagano Winter Games. www.colby.edu.

A Sweet Season

Led by All-American Jenna DiSimone '98, the women's soccer team reached the Division III Sweet Sixteen, the furthest a Colby team in any sport has advanced in NCAA post-season play.

After defeating Plymouth State to advance to the New England regional final, the Mules finally were eliminated by Middlebury in a classic, four-overtime battle played in a torrential rain. Middlebury scored after two hours and 41 minutes of play to break a 0-0 tie in the fourth sudden-death

overtime period.

The team's performance is by far the best of any at Colby since the College began participating in NCAA post-season competition in the early '90s.

DiSimone ended her Colby career tied for seventh in career scoring with 14 goals, 7 assists and 35 points. She was the first women's soccer player in Colby history to be named All-American and was also named to the All-New England, All-NESCAC and NSCAA (National Soccer Coaches Athletic Association) teams. ♦

Whitmore In Hall



Dick Whitmore, Colby athletic director and men's basketball coach, will be inducted into the Maine Sports Hall of Fame in June.

Whitmore, who has coached at Colby since 1970, had compiled a 460-199 record entering the 1997-98 season. His teams have had winning records in 24 of his 27 years as coach and notched three ECAC championships. He has served as Colby's athletic director since 1987.

Whitmore "will be joining a prestigious group of outstanding sports figures who have brought glory and honor to the state of Maine," said MSHF President Daniel Gacetta. ♦

Winning Scores

The prize for the highest academic rank of all Colby sports teams goes to Tricia O'Brien's women's basketball squad, boasting a 3.3 cumulative GPA with 10 of 15 members on the Dean's List. The Women's Basketball Coaches Association has ranked the team 19th on the WCBA Academic Top-25 team honor roll.

Next, at Colby, comes women's volleyball and women's squash, each with 3.2 cumulative averages. Seven of eight players on the volleyball team are Dean's List members. Tops among the men's squads is Sura Dubow's swim team, with a 3.1 cumulative GPA and 10 of 15 members on the Dean's List. Men's squash, ski and track teams are close behind, each with 3.0 averages. ♦

sports shorts



Graham Nelson '98

All-American goalkeeper **Graham Nelson '98** and All-NESCAC backfielder **Matthew Sawatzky '99** paced the **men's soccer** team to a 9-5-1 record and a number nine ranking in the New England Division III coaches poll. The Mules went to the ECAC Championships for the first time since 1994, losing in the first round, 2-0, to Babson. Highlights included a 1-0 sudden-death overtime victory at Middlebury and a 3-2 win over Amherst when the winning goal was scored with 11 seconds to play. Assistant coach John Osbourne was inducted as the first member of the Maine State Soccer Coaches Association Hall of Fame. . . . **Farrell Burns '98** placed 17th at the **women's cross country** national meet to earn All-America status. Burns's time of 19:06 put her two seconds behind Middlebury's Katy Masselam, the only NESCAC finisher to place higher. . . . **Wilson Everhart '99** was the most valuable runner for the **men's cross country** team. He ran a team-best 25:48 at Boston's five-mile Franklin Park course. . . . Senior **Jessie Anderson** led the **women's tennis** team with a 7-3 record at number one singles and teamed with junior **Kim Cheah** to go 7-3 in number one doubles, including victories over highly ranked Smith and



Katie Taylor '98

Williams. The squad defeated MIT 6-3 to avenge last year's 0-9 drubbing. . . . Despite a disappointing 3-11 season, the **field hockey** team boasted one of the nation's standout players in defensive specialist **Katie Taylor '98**, who earned All-America honors and a place on the North/South senior all-star team. A tri-captain, Taylor

also was first team All-NESCAC. She holds Colby records for most defensive saves in a career (28) and a season (12). . . . **Jackie Bates '98** was a first team All-NESCAC selection for the **volleyball** team, which finished 16-15.