

## Ashley DiClemente and Andrew Wheating Named USATF –New England Athletes of the Month for December



BOSTON – **Ashley DiClemente**, age 10 of Narragansett, RI and **Andrew Wheating**, age 18 of Norwich, VT have been named co-winners of USA Track & Field – New England’s Athlete of the Month award for December 2005. On December 10 at Bryant College in Smithfield, RI at the USA Junior Olympic National Cross Country Championships, DiClemente won the national title in the Bantam Girls division (age 10 and under) and Wheating ran to victory in the Young Men’s race (age 17-18). A major snowstorm the day before nearly jeopardized the event and it required massive snow removal – much of it provided by the host Sentinel Striders – to make the courses navigable, if not ideal.



DiClemente, a silver medallist in the 800 meters at the USATF National Junior Olympic Championships in July 2005, won her 3K race in 12:39.83, catching the leader with 400 meters to go, and using her track speed to surge ahead with 100 meters left. DiClemente, the youngest athlete of the month winner since the inception of the program in May 2004, has run cross country for three seasons. She was elated at her national championship and felt extra excitement at being able to win in her home state.

Wheating had fairly modest expectations going into his race. Looking at the times in previous championship races, he was hoping to finish in the top 20. He said that he felt good about running in the cold because he knew it would keep his body temperature down. In the minutes before the race, he exhorted himself to run “at a higher pitch” with a faster pace and tempo than he was used to. To his surprise, he was in the lead group right away and ran from the front most of the race, winning by 7 seconds. He timed 14:54.01 for a course that was a little shorter than the intended 5K because the previous day’s snowfall required some modifications of the course.

Wheating, a senior at Kimball Union Academy, said that since winning the national championship, some nationally prominent colleges have begun to recruit him and that he has raised his aspirations for the future, expressing hope that he can make a run at the 2012 Olympic team.

Other New England medal winners at the USA Junior Olympic National Cross Country Championships included third place finishes by **Luke Babcock** of Exeter, NH in the Bantam Boys race, **Victoria Godbillot** of Arlington, MA in the Bantam Girls race and **Erin Lagasse** of Barrington, RI in the Young Women’s division.

### Athlete of the Month

is a new program for USATF- New England and is designed to recognize outstanding performers at all levels of the sport. USATF-NE will name a new honoree each month and feature the athlete on the USATF-NE website.

*USATF – New England’s mission is to continue its leadership role as one of the outstanding associations of the national governing body in Athletics. USATF – New England provides opportunities for athletes of all ages to pursue excellence in long distance running, race walking, and track and field, from grassroots to the elite level.*

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