

Ayalew Taye Named USATF New England Athlete of the Month



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BOSTON – Ayalew Taye, age 19, a senior at Cushing Academy in Ashburnham, MA has been named USA Track & Field’s Athlete of the Month for November 2006. On November 5 at the USATF – New England Cross Country Championships held at Franklin Park in Boston, Taye became the youngest winner in decades as he posted a 30:31 time for the 10K course, beating a strong and experienced field.

Taye is a U.S. citizen who emigrated from Ethiopia in November of 2002. He lived first in Portland, ME and began high school there. When he and his brother **Sintayehu**, two years younger and also a highly successful runner, were looking for a prep school, Cushing Academy appeared to be an optimal choice because 25% of the student body are international students and the school is noted for its English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program. The Taye family’s first language is Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia.

Stirling Ince, Taye’s coach at Cushing Academy, described Ayalew as “highly self-motivated” in academics as well as running, noting that he has made the honor roll every term. He also portrayed both Taye brothers as “level-headed and laid back,” saying, “they just love to run fast...they don’t get caught up with all the attention.” He noted that even after winning races, they don’t celebrate but quickly turn their attention to other challenges such as keeping up with their schoolwork.

Coach Ince entered Ayalew in the USATF – New England Cross Country Championships because he wanted to give him the

opportunity to run a race with other runners ahead of him and around him, instead of alone in front. Taye competed in 5K races all fall, and no special effort was made to prepare him for the 10K championship race. Ince anticipated that, with training mileage at 50-60 a week and a lack of experience at the longer distance, Taye might have trouble after about 8 kilometers. Taye, however, stayed smooth and strong, as he surged past two runners in the last of three laps and sprinted to victory.

Taye has been recruited by numerous colleges and, at this point, has narrowed his choice down to five schools. Ince stated that Taye “wants to run as fast as he can and would like to see how far he can go in the future” with an eye to competing at the highest level possible.

On the women’s side at the USATF – New England cross country champs, **Mary Cullen** of Ireland, a 2006 Providence College graduate, won the 6K race in a fast 19:47. Her time ranks in the top 10 all-time for the course. Also excelling in November were **Lindsey Donaldson** of Yale University (from Lincoln, MA) who placed 3rd at the NCAA Division I cross country champs and **Nicole Plante**, of University of Massachusetts – Lowell who was 2nd in the NCAA Division II cross country champs, just 5 seconds back of the winner.

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.