

Ruben Sanca Named USATF – New England's Athlete of the Month for January



Photo by Alison Wade (eliterunning.com)

BOSTON – **Ruben Sanca**, age 22 of Dorchester, MA, a senior at UMass-Lowell, has been named USA Track & Field – New England's Athlete of the Month for January 2009. On January 11, at the Dartmouth Relays in Hanover, NH, Sanca ran the 3000 meters in a personal best of 8:09.05, finishing third. On January 24 at the Boston University Terrier Invitational, Ruben ran 14:05.46 for 5000 meters, breaking the school record by more than 5 seconds and achieving qualifying marks for both the NCAA Division II National Championships and for the U.S. Indoor Championships that will be held in Boston at the Reggie Lewis track.

Sanca is a graduate of John O'Bryant High School in Boston, and is a captain of the UMass-Lowell men's cross country and track & field teams. Born in Cape Verde, his family came to the U.S. in search of educational opportunity when Ruben was 12. In high school, Sanca says he learned the fundamentals of quality running, but had not yet built a strong aerobic base. Nonetheless, he won an indoor state championship in the 1000 meters.

Sanca has progressed steadily during his career at UMass-Lowell and offers much credit to head coach, **Gary Gardner**. He also notes that, in both the 3000 and 5000 races in January, **Nate Jenkins**, an assistant coach at Lowell and a national class marathoner, set a fast pace that helped him run his best. In the 5000 at B.U., Jenkins was looking for a qualifier for the U.S. Indoor champs (14:07) and Ruben's plan was to keep up with him and qualify for the NCAA DII nationals, by running under 14:20. Coming through 3200 at 9 minutes flat, Ruben was sure he could get his qualifier, but the pace stayed fast and he finished strongly. He was surprised and happy at the finish, but was more focused on breaking the school record, than on qualifying for U.S. Nationals. He explains that he will not compete at the U.S. Indoors, because the New England DII champs are that weekend, and that presents an opportunity to win points for his team in multiple events and hopefully win an individual title as well. The following week, he will compete at the DII Nationals in Houston, TX.

Ruben averages 90-100 miles a week in training, including long interval workouts such as 3-4 repeat miles with short rests. He looks for continued improvement after college, noting the importance of staying injury free to allow consistent training. Despite his recent indoor success, at 6' 2 ½" with a long stride, Ruben is more suited to outdoor track. In the future, he would like to represent his native Cape Verde at the Olympic and world championship level. He notes that the second Lusophone Games (for Portuguese-speaking countries) will take place in Lisbon, Portugal this summer and that this might become his first opportunity to compete internationally.

USATF – New England's mission is to continue its leadership role as one of the outstanding associations of the national governing body in Athletics.