

Jim Spisak Named USATF – New England’s Athlete of the Month for October 2015



Photo: usatfne.org

BOSTON – **Jim Spisak**, of Woonsocket, RI, who competes for NE Distance, is USA Track & Field - New England's Athlete of the Month for October 2015. On October 4, at the USATF 10 Mile Championships in Minneapolis, MN, Jim finished 4th in a blazing 46:59, only 12 seconds off the winning time. On October 25, at the Mayor's Cup Cross Country Championships at Franklin Park in Boston, Jim finished second in a deep field. His 23:20 for the 8K course was 2nd behind Nike Oregon's Trevor Dunbar's 23:17, as he led NE Distance to the team title.

Spisak, a Pennsylvania native, graduated from Duquesne University in 2014, where he starred in track and cross country, becoming only the second Duquesne athlete to qualify for the NCAA Division 1 Track & Field Championships. His best times on the track include 13:36.20 for 5000 meters at the Adrian Martinez Classic in Concord, MA this past June, and 28:20.65 for 10,000 meters at the Payton Jordan Cardinal Invitational at Stanford this past May.

With a B.S. in secondary school education, Jim received a job offer as a high school social studies teacher in the Pittsburgh area. However, he decided that working full-time would not allow him to achieve his potential as a runner. He looked at other options and decided that NE Distance in Rhode Island offered an optimal opportunity. The non-profit organization has a dual mission: providing support to post-collegiate athletes on a path to top-level competition, while also promoting health and well-being to children. The club provides its members with fellowships to support their intensive training regimens. When not training, team members work 16-20 hours per week in after school programs. Jim's fellowship includes coaching middle school cross country programs in Providence and Woonsocket and mentoring the young athletes.

Jim was barely a month into his new role when he went to Minneapolis to race the USATF 10 Mile Championships. His performance validated his bold move to NE Distance. Spisak knew that the field was very strong, stating that there were 15 runners capable of placing in the top 5. He says that "everything clicked for me that day," as he raced to a personal best of

46:59 and 4th place. Three weeks later, at the Mayor's Cup Cross Country Championships, Jim says, "it was really nice to get to race with my team and a lot of fun to be able to lead us to the win." He expresses frustration that he didn't get the individual victory, but praises Trevor Dunbar of Team Oregon for having a little extra in the finishing sprint. Spisak also talked of enjoying competing on the historic Franklin Park cross country course.

In March 2016, citing personal issues, Jim "took some time away from the sport" and returned to Pittsburgh. At the end of May, with the Olympic Trials looming in early July, Spisak resumed training for the 10,000 meters at the trials. It was a hot day in Eugene, Oregon and his time away from running took its toll as he finished 19th in the race. Nonetheless, he says he enjoyed the experience of competing in Eugene and the camaraderie of his fellow Olympic Trials participants. He has now rejoined NE Distance and is eager to resume forward movement in running and in other life pursuits.

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