

HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING



Karen London (2762) poses for a group photo at the World Indoors Masters.

When your marriage leads to competition

BY KAREN LONDON
Special to the Daily Sun

I imagine most married people have occasionally thought, “I am only in this situation because of who I married.” Case in point: in March, I found myself competing at the World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships in the 55-59 age class of the triple jump — an occurrence that had approximately zero probability of happening had I not married Rich Hofstetter 26 years ago.

We both enjoyed running even before we got married. I ran a lot of 5Ks and 10Ks, and he raced distances ranging from the 55-meters to the marathon. We continued our love of the sport after marrying, competing in a half-marathon on our honeymoon, racing various Turkey Trots, July Fourth events, Jingle Bell Runs and the Summer Series after we moved to Flagstaff in 2005. I ran a single marathon in 2014 to see if I would fall in love with the distance. (Spoiler alert: I did not.)

Our sons (now a junior and a senior in college) competed in track and field as well as cross country in high school, and both continued with track and field in college. Like many Flagstaff

kids, they tried various events, including long jump and triple jump. At one point, the entire family was jumping. My husband began triple jumping before I did — which made sense because he is the sprinter from whose talent our sons inherited their speed and springiness.

Triple jumping well requires speed, power and explosiveness, none of which I have in great quantity. There are some useful skills I have, such as a reasonable amount of coordination, intact joints and a willingness to try something new in middle age.

The 2025 World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships was in Gainesville, Florida, which is where much of my husband’s family lives, so he really wanted to go. I was going to be traveling there with him anyway, so the next thing you know, I am scheduled to compete as well.

This would never have happened if I had not married Rich. Never. I can imagine no scenario in which this would happen in any alternate reality.

So that’s how I came to be spiking up by the triple jump runway and thinking, “What am I doing?” The thought came

when I noticed that the woman next to me, Mónica Falcioni Costa, against whom I would momentarily be competing, had the Olympic rings tattooed on her ankle. It turns out she had competed for Uruguay in the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. She placed second in our competition, behind winner Annica Sandström, a former Swedish national champion.

Since you might be wondering how my competition went, I will share, though that is hardly the point. I came in seeded 10th of 10 in my age class, and finished in ninth, jumping 1-centimeter off my personal record. It was a good jumping day for me, but even better was the glorious experience of participating in an international competition with amazing women. I’m thrilled my marriage brought me to that moment.

Karen London is a recreational jumper and runner who trains at the back of the pack with Team Run Flagstaff, allowing her to keep her eyes on everybody except when she is getting lapped. **Rachel Smith** is the coordinating editor for the High Country Running column. You can email her at rachschnaid18@gmail.com to contribute to this column.

LOCAL

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with a 4-0 record in the 1A Conference and a 3-0 ledger in North Region play.

The Yetis were scheduled to travel to face the Williams Vikings (4-3, 2-2 1A Central) on Friday followed by a home match at 6 p.m. on Tuesday against the

Seligman Antelopes (1-3, 0-1 1A Central).

Boys Soccer

Spartans 3, Yellowjackets 0

After a 13-0 drubbing over the Williams (1-5, 0-3 Fall North) on Tuesday, Northland Prep earned a second straight shutout and third straight win with a victory over the Blue

Ridge Yellowjackets at Peaks View County Park on Wednesday.

NPA (5-1, 1-0 Fall North) picked up those three victories in its streak over seven days. The team will get eight days off before its next match against the North Valley Christian Lions (1-4-1, 0-2 Fall Central) on Friday at Sinagua Middle School.

NAU

FROM PAGE 1

31 in Flagstaff.

Championship season kicks off with the MPSF Conference Championships in Pharr, Texas, from Feb. 25 to 28. It will be the first time that Northern Arizona has competed in this conference, after making the transition from the Western Athletic Conference this year.

The Lumberjacks were crowned WAC champions for the past 12 consecutive years. Most recently, the team scored a total of 694.5 points, finishing 160.5 points ahead of New Mexico State.

NAU will also host the NCAA Zone Diving in Flagstaff from March 9 to 11 before qualifying athletes compete at the NCAA Swimming and Diving National Championship in Atlanta from March 18 to 21.

Last year, Victoria Knapp represented the Lumberjacks, competing in the national 1-meter event.

Volleyball

NAU continued on its winning streak after defeating USC Upstate, 3-1, Thursday morning in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

NAU improved to 8-2, while USC Upstate moved to 6-5.

The first set was a back-and-forth exchange, with the score tied 12 times by 14-14. From there, the Spartans built momentum with two consecutive service aces, followed by a kill and a block to pull ahead 18-14. A kill by NAU’s Hanah Stoddard, Keira Hall’s third service ace of the

set and a kill by Sophia Wadsworth brought the Lumberjacks within one at 20-19. However, USC Upstate closed out the set with a 5-1 run to take it 25-20.

NAU responded with a 6-2 run after an early tie to start the second set, including another ace from Hall, to take a 10-6 lead. Laney Wilson and Gigi Greenlee combined for two blocks to spark a surge for the Lumberjacks. Kills by Wadsworth, Wilson, Masina Perez and Ella Hosfeld, along with another ace from Hall, helped the Lumberjacks take the set, 25-22.

The Lumberjacks pulled ahead 15-11 in the fourth thanks to a block assist by Gottschalk and Stoddard and a kill by Stoddard. Gottschalk continued to contribute at the net with more blocks and kills, keeping NAU ahead, 20-16. Wadsworth and Wilson added kills during a 5-0 run, capped off by a Greenlee block to take the set, 25-18.

NAU won another tight set in the third, 25-22.

The Lumberjacks hit .290 as a team over four sets. Stoddard led the offense with 13 kills, while also adding 10 digs and two assists. Wadsworth followed with 11 kills and one block.

Northern Arizona was scheduled to compete in the Wofford Invitational, also in Spartanburg, with two matches on Friday against Marshall and Gardner-Webb and a match on Saturday against host school Wofford.

Soccer

A first-half goal downed NAU as it fell to

Grand Canyon (5-3), 1-0, on Thursday evening inside Lumberjack Stadium. The loss snapped a six-match unbeaten streak for the Lumberjacks, who closed non-conference play with a 3-2-4 mark.

NAU was paced by Avery Ott with six shots. Micala Boex took four, while Madisyn Marchesi added three. The Lumberjacks outshot GCU 22-10, forcing 12 saves from the Antelopes’ keeper.

Reece Reichwald made her eighth start between the posts and played all 90 minutes, making three saves.

Ott wasted no time attacking after kickoff, getting a shot on goal that hit the crossbar in the third minute. Both teams got deep into each other’s attacking territory early, drawing four corner kicks in the first 10 minutes. Olivia Bos was next to try breaking the tie, as she ripped one in the 27th minute that was just over the crossbar.

Shortly after, GCU broke out in transition and took a shot on goal that was saved by Reichwald, but the Antelopes found the back of the net a moment later to make it 1-0 in the 29th minute. The Lumberjacks did not allow a shot on goal the rest of the half, but went into the break down by one.

NAU will remain home as it welcomes Big Sky preseason-favorite Montana to Flagstaff on Thursday, Sept. 25, to open conference play. Kickoff is scheduled for 8 p.m. and can be streamed on ESPN+. **Jack Shea, Ashley Croft and Maxwell Nagle** of NAU Sports Information contributed to this roundup.

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