

# 'I think he's a legitimate contender to qualify for World Championships, he's a legitimate contender at the NCAAs to win his first title!'

— Oregon Director of Track and Field  
Vin Lananna

**G**alen Rupp also heads into this week's national championships harboring Olympic dreams, and hunting for his first NCAA title.

After suffering through a thyroid condition that hampered his training throughout last season, this season marks a rejuvenation for the man who is being heralded as the successor to legendary Oregon distance runner Steve Prefontaine.

"Last year was unfortunate because of my thyroid problem and I didn't have a performance anywhere near what I would have liked," Rupp said. "Still, it helped build my character and taught me another lesson about running and not taking anything for granted."

"I definitely moved on from the last year, and this year I'm much better prepared, largely thanks to my family, coaches, friends and God who have looked out for me."

Rupp has already set new personal bests in both the 5,000 meter and the 10,000 meter this year.

At the Oregon Invitational in April, he held off defending NCAA champion Chris Solinsky in the 5,000 meters to take the title with a personal best of 13:30.49.

Then, two weeks later at the Stanford Invitational, Rupp rewrote the record books this year when he shattered former Duck Bill McChesney's 25-year-old Oregon record in the 10,000-meter race.

Rupp's time of 27:33.48 was more than 15 seconds faster than McChesney's 27:50.83 1982 record. It is also the third-fastest time in NCAA history.

"Galen Rupp has put himself in a position where he is truly an international-caliber athlete," Lananna said. "I think he's a legitimate contender to qualify for World

Championships, he's a legitimate contender at the NCAAs to win his first title."

This week, in an effort to maintain his fitness toward his ultimate goal of making the Olympic team, Rupp has elected to compete only in the 10,000-meter race even though he qualified for the 5,000 meter as well.

"It was a tough call because the team could have used some extra points, but we decided that we probably weren't going to win a team championship, and if we looked longer term, it would have hurt my chances the following week at (USA Outdoor Championships)," Rupp said. "It's a tough double to do at the NCAAs, so we agreed that we made the right decision. Everybody's comfortable with it and my teammates support it."

Lananna emphasized that Rupp's well-being and the team's well being are synonymous.

"Is there a conflict between what's good for the team and what's good for Galen Rupp? There's absolutely no conflict between those two endeavors," Lananna said. "Galen has a shot at winning the NCAAs and what better stake for the University of Oregon and Eugene, Oregon than to say we've got the NCAA champion in the 10,000 meters and a guy who's got a legitimate chance of making the U.S. team?"

Like Noble, the NCAA championships is but a stepping stone for Rupp, the number one seed going into this week. But regardless of what happens in Sacramento, Rupp's season will not end there.

"The NCAAs is another chance to compete and not worry about times or splits so much as the fundamentals of beating people," Rupp said. "It's important long-term in the next year in some respect, although we're not trying to overemphasize any race, even the USA Championships (June 21) or the Olympic Trials."

"I want to go into this weekend with the mentality to do my best and try to win it."

A win in the 10,000 meters would give Rupp, a three-time All-American, his first collegiate title and elevate him to the heights of former Oregon legends like McChesney, Prefontaine and Alberto Salazar.

"It means a lot to be compared to those guy who have compiled such a great history," Rupp said, "They were great in so many ways, and it's truly an honor to try and join them in a special way. I can only hope to do some of what they actually accomplished."

Rupp also quashed rumors about him leaving the Ducks and turning pro at the end of this season.

"I'm certainly enjoying college life. We still have big meets coming up, so my attention is 100 percent on them right now," Rupp said. "The thought hasn't crossed my mind about what will happen in the future."

"It's on training and doing everything I can at nationals and helping the team. I don't want it to ever become a distraction because I'm so happy with how everything's gone. I'm trying to enjoy my time here right now."

**EW**

**Galen Rupp will be going for his first NCAA title**



GEOFF THURNER