

American Indian runners to represent USA

Santa Fe, NM—On Saturday, March 21, 1992, the world's greatest runners will compete at the 20th Annual I.A.A.F. World Cross Country Championships in Boston. For the first time ever, two American Indian runners will be on the USA teams: Wings of America senior runner Milfred Tewawina, Hopi and Wings' junior runner Shane Garcia, Acoma. Each qualified for the USA national teams at the The Athletic Congress USA Cross-Country trials held in Memphis, Tennessee on February 9.

Tewawina, 27, from Tuba City, Arizona, placed seventh in the top eight qualifiers for the USA Senior Men's team, with a time of 36:23 in the 12k competition.

Garcia, 19, a freshman at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina, qualified for the six-member USA Junior Men's Team, with a time of 25:59 in the 8k race, only 3 seconds short of the number one junior runner, Jason Casiano, from Madison, Wis.

"This is really an exciting moment for Wings of America," according to Will Channing, Wings' founder and Director. "It's the third time we've sent our Indian runners to the national qualifying race, and to have two of them qualify for the national team is outstanding. This will set a precedence for other Wings' runners and all young Indian runners, and inspire and motivate them, and give them the confidence to compete nationally."

Wings of America, an all-Indian youth development project of The Earth Circle Foundation, uses running as a vehicle for encouraging self-esteem and pride among Native American men and women. It was originally founded as Wings of the Southwest in 1988 by Channing, a Santa Fe, New Mexico gallery owner. Now there are six regional Wings' teams.

Once a year each Wings region sends a team of runners to compete in the national Cross-country Championships in November. From 1988-1990, the Wings of Southwest Junior Men's Team had been the undefeated national champions. In 1991 they were nipped by the Dartmouth college Junior Varsity Squad. The Wings of the Southwest Junior Women's team, however, captured the national title in 1991.

"Running is a natural activity for Indian people," continues Channing. "Unfortunately, they haven't had the same opportunities that other ethnic

groups have had in competitive sports. They are excellent runners, and Wings hopes to give them the opportunities to cultivate their innate talent and compete in a national and international level."

"We have several Olympic hopefuls this year, and you might even see one of them at the Olympics this summer in Barcelona, Spain. The last Indian Olympian was Billy Mills, who won a gold medal in 1964. There's no reason why Native Americans can't be out there competing for the gold in every Olympics," Channing said. "They just need support and our goal is to find and provide that support. To have these two excellent runners qualify for an international event sets the stage, both for themselves, and for other Indian runners. It's an incredible confidence builder for everyone, including their families and communities."

Tewawina, who is following in the footsteps of his ancestral clansman, Louis Tewanima, who won a silver medal in the 10k at the Stockholm Olympics in 1912, offered these comments about the race:

"I'm ecstatic. I can't put it into words or explain it. After the race I didn't realize what I had done. It didn't hit me until I got home, that I was going to represent the United States. Making this team shows that Indian runners are coming around again and that they can do it too, with hard work."

On his performance at the race, Garcia said, "I worked so hard. This is such an accomplishment to make the USA team. My coach suggested I had a good chance, but I'm humble. I don't predict anything. I always focus on the outcome and hope I do my best."

Garcia's advice to other Indian runners: "First of all, education is important; it will take you a long way. So is your God-gifted ability to run, but you can't always look to running. You're always one step away from injury. When you get your diploma, you have something to fall back on. Study hard and keep your aspirations high. And, believe in yourself. If you do, you can do anything."

Tewawina is training for an Olympic qualifying time in the 10,000 meters. Other Wing's Olympic hopefuls include: Maurice Smith, Navajo, in the mile, and Donny Belcourt, Chippewa-Cree, in the 5000 meters. Both Belcourt and Smith have already qualified for the Olympic trials to be held in June in New Orleans.



Indian Olympic UNION organized last June

It is a scene far off if the dreamy distance, but the images burn bright, like the Olympic Flame itself.

The dream takes us to Atlanta in 1996, and the opening ceremonies for the Summer Olympic Games. Athletes from nation after nation parade into the stadium, and suddenly, a group of American Indian athletes enter. They walk with pride. Their own team. Their own flag. Their own nation.

Matt Spencer, a 35-year-old white man living near Boston, would like to make that dream a reality. Last June, Spencer created an organization called UNION. It stands for Unite Now Indian Olympic Nation, and it is a movement Spencer says could become the most

significant accomplishment for American Indians in this century.

"The idea of UNION has tremendous potential in two critical areas," Spencer said. "A symbolic Olympic nation would be a great inspiration to many American Indians. And second, the Olympics is the ultimate media event to wake up the world to the issues that deeply affect American Indians."

Spencer is a former sports writer who has been involved in a variety of writing projects and sports promotions that he calls "a collage of small triumphs and amusing failures." But with UNION he sees a deeper purpose, and is driven to reach this quest.

Tribal member wins cash

Kathy Cawley won \$75.00 from the Forestry department on February 14, 1992, after her name was drawn from all of the Resource Management Questionnaires that were turned in. Daughters Nicole and Jessica Cawley are happy to help accept the check. On behalf of the Forestry Department, "Thank you to those who participated in the Resource Management Questionnaire."



Left to Right: Connie Monson, Kathy Cawley, Nicole Cawley, and Jessica Cawley.

CONGRATULATIONS... to Brandon Robertson, Joe Mercier, Brad and Brent Leno for placing in the USA State Wrestling Tournament on February 21, 1992.
Joe Mercier - First place
Brandon Robertson - Fifth place
Brad Leno - First place
Brent Leno - First place