

Athlete Profile **Alex Kosinski**

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Alex Kosinski's senior year of competitive running at Oak Ridge High School (El Dorado Hills, Calif.) started out all wet. During fall cross country season she was in the pool swimming up to two hours a day while recovering from a metatarsal stress fracture. Then she added up to two hours a day of biking. It was not a typical regimen for a high school athlete who would soon break records.



Don Gosney Photo

But Alex Kosinski isn't your typical runner.

This year, the dedicated 18 year-old set a girls national high school 1,600-meter outdoor record in 4 minutes, 38.15 seconds.

When Kosinski was a youngster in Junior Lifeguards, her dad (a "really good swimmer when he was young," according to Kosinski) came to watch her one day. There was a competition for the young lifeguards—a long run.

"My dad was watching, talking to a friend, saying 'she'll probably do pretty good; she'll probably be in the middle,'" Alex reminisced. "When they looked up, I won by a really long way. That's when we figured I was fast."

Kosinski also played soccer, but in her sophomore year she decided to drop it and focus on running. The results of her dedication to running were soon obvious. As a junior, Kosinski finished fifth at the 2005 California State High School Division II Cross Country Championships, and 20th at the 2005 Foot Locker National Cross Country Finals. On the track she placed second

at the 2006 Golden West Invitational Girls' Mile (4:42.93 to Jordan Hasay's winning 4:42.21), and second at the 2006 CIF State Track and Field Championships 1,600m (4:42.31).



Kosinski (center) and Hasay (left) Don Gosney Photo

Invitational in late March, she registered an impressive relay double of 4:40 (1,600m) and 2:07 (800m). At the prestigious Arcadia Invitational girls' one mile run last April, Alex captured yet another victory in 4:43.34.

The highlight of Kosinski's 2007 campaign came in a much anticipated 1,600m match-up with Jordan Hasay at the April, 2007 Sacramento Meet of Champions. Going into that race, coach Fairley knew Alex was ready to do something special.

"She was training with the boys, doing 400s, recovering 70 seconds later, doing another 68-second 400, and doing those back to back to back," recalled Fairley. "It was a really good indication she was ready to go fast."

Then, the injury struck. A stress fracture in the third metatarsal of her right foot meant she would miss two crucial months of running during the fall 2006 cross country season. Not to be deterred, Kosinski cross-trained hours every day, logging time both on a bike and in the pool.

"It was pretty phenomenal what she decided to do so she could finish her cross country season," commented her coach, Rob Fairley. "I've never been around a high school athlete that dedicated."

Alex's dedication paid off as she improved to second place at the 2006 California State High School Division II Cross Country Championships.

By spring of 2007, training 60 to 65 miles a week, a healthy Alex began her attack on the record books. At the Nike Indoor Nationals on March 11, 2007, Kosinski powered a 4:45.18 mile for the win and a new meet record (old record: 4:45.32, Katelyn Kaltenbach, 2004). At the Stanford

There was, however, one hitch in their plans: Alex came down with a head cold and sore throat a couple of days before the meet. She was still sick the day of her race. Undaunted, Kosinski led the first lap in 69 seconds.

“They told me to get in front of [Hasay], lead the pace, and make her be on my outside,” Kosinski said. “I led the first couple of laps; then Jordan led the third lap, and I stuck right with her. With about 250 to go, I tried to just sprint by her.”

The result—a new national high school federation outdoor record for Kosinski in 4:38.15. Hasay finished second in 4:43.85.

The victory was extra sweet. Not only had Hasay beaten Kosinski in this same meet last year, but Hasay had just broken the girls high school 1,600m national record with a 4:39.13 a month before.

Less than an hour after Kosinski’s record-setting run, she turned in a 2:07.84 for 800m, the fastest girls’ high school time in the nation to that date. The double winning performance showcased both Kosinski’s speed and strength.

“When Alex doesn’t have a pop coming off her forefeet, I know her legs are feeling pretty tired,” Fairley said. “But, they weren’t heavy, even after a 4:38. It was a very special evening for her.”

Little did coach and athlete know that the Sacramento Meet of Champions would mark the culmination of Alex’s high school running career. In late May, at the CIF Sac-Joaquin Section Masters Meet, Kosinski injured her left heel running on Oak Ridge’s 4x400 relay team. She aggravated the injury the next day in the 1,600m final when she heard a “pop.” The eventual diagnosis was a slight tear in her plantar fascia. Instead of competing in the California state meet, Kosinski watched from the sidelines with her foot in a cast.

“That was very, very tough for [Alex] and her family and everyone that’s been involved with supporting Alex through her high school career,” said coach Fairley. “We had to make sure she was healthy for college. Watching the state meet 1,600 final in a cast was not a lot of fun for her. But she’s a trooper. She’s got a great attitude.”

Two weeks later, the cast was removed, and by four and a half weeks she was back in the pool and on the bike again, cross-training in preparation for her freshman year of college. Kosinski’s affinity for water will serve her well. She’s headed to Eugene this fall to run for the University of Oregon’s Ducks.

“The one positive thing about my injury, it left a lot of room for improvement,” said Kosinski. “I thought I’d be able to beat my [record] time that I’d run earlier in the season, and I wasn’t able to do it. Now I’ll have a lot more room for improvement in college.”

If Kosinski's determination remains true under coach Vin Lananna's guidance at Oregon, and she can keep injuries at bay, indeed Kosinski will continue to show that she's far from a typical competitor.

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