

T&FN INTERVIEW

Galen Rupp

by Sieg Lindstrom

Galen Rupp has had an eventful year, and an even more hectic fall.

On September 25, he married former Oregon steepler Keara Sammons. "She's great," says Rupp. "She's been more than understanding [of his pro runner's lifestyle]. We're gone a lot, whether it's training camps or traveling to race throughout the summer. Just the daily toll of it: I think she understands that and I'm really lucky to have someone that gets that."

In October the newlyweds bought a house in Rupp's native Portland, and dove into furnishing it. "We'll fill it up slowly but we're still going out and picking some furniture out," Rupp said when T&FN checked in and caught him unpacking boxes. "I think most

of the big stuff we have. I think we just need to get a table; that's probably the biggest thing we need."

A runner's gotta eat, after all. And before the autumn nuptials, Rupp did plenty with his running.

In his first post-collegiate season, the erstwhile Duck star, who still has a few credits left to earn toward his Business degree, set PRs at every distance mile—10,000.

In the 25-lapper he raced under Meb Keflezighi's old American Record, although fellow Nike Oregon star Chris Solinsky bagged the new record.

Rupp won the USATF Indoor 3K, made the World Indoor final (5th), and

your training group: you got married this fall, the Gouchers became parents, Dathan Ritzenhein's second child was born, Alan Webb got married.

Rupp: Yeah, yeah. A lot of the big life-decisions we've had in the last month. It's been a little hectic but we got through it and we're doing good now.

T&FN: Any general thoughts on how the '10 season, your first pro year, went for you?

Rupp: I thought it went pretty well but I thought it would be a little easier leaving the collegiate scene and transitioning into being a professional

When I look back on it I think there's definitely more pressure, whether it's pressure you put on yourself or not.

It's like your job now so that definitely takes it up another level, and obviously the competition's a lot better.

But I think I handled it pretty well and it was a really good year, all things considered, with everything that was going on in my life. I was happy about it.

It's been great thinking about this year coming up. We'll be so much more settled down and things won't be as hectic—with planning the wedding and a lot of stuff was in a million different places.

Just managing all of that and then finding a house, buying a house, moving. It took more of a toll on me than I thought it would. That was probably just ignorance on my part but I was happy with the year.

T&FN: You should be. You set PRs in every event from the mile to the 10,000. I know your standards are very high but when you run faster than you ever have at all those distances it has to count for something.

Rupp: Yeah, definitely. We were able to sit down at the end of the year and do a big kind of review of the whole year—what areas where we did well and where we could improve; everything like that.

That was kind of where we came down to any time that you PR, it's still improving even if it's just little improvements and not huge ones like you might have hoped for. As long as you're going in the right direction it can't be considered a really bad year by any means.

Rupp In A Nutshell

•**Personal:** Galen Rupp was born May 8, 1986, in Portland, Oregon; 5-11/138 (1.80/62)

•**Schools:** Central Catholic (Portland) HS '04; Oregon '09; now represents Nike

•**Coach:** Alberto Salazar (HS, college & pro)

•**PRs:** 800—1:49.87i ('09); 1500—3:39.14 ('09); Mile—3:56.22i ('10); 3000—7:42.40i ('10); 5000—13:07.35 ('10) (7, x A); 10,000—27:10.74 ('10) (2, 2 A)

•**Major Meets:**

1500—2)USJ '05;

3000—7)WYC '03; 6)NCI '06; 4)NCI '07; 1)NCI '09; 2)USI, 5)WCI '10;

5000—2)USJ '03; 1)USJ '04, 9)WJ '04; 5)NCI, 9)NC '06; 3)NCI '07; 1)NCI, 1)NC '09;

10,000—2)NC '05; 6)NC '06; 2)NC, 2)US, 11)WC '07; 2)OT, 13)OG '08; 1)NC, 1)US, 8)WC '09; 1)US '10;

XC—20)WJ '05; 6)NC '06; 2)NC '07; 1)NC '08; 1)NC, 1)US, 8)WC '09

U.S. Rankings: 5000—6 ('09), ? ('10); 10,000—4 ('05), 2 ('07), 2 ('08), 2 ('09), 2? ('10)

won his second consecutive U.S. 10,000 title.

For this interview Rupp reflected on all of it.

T&FN: So I'm interrupting your efforts to set up the house you just bought?

Rupp: We're just moving in right now. We just got it yesterday and are just busy unpacking furniture and stuff.

T&FN: There have been a lot of life events in

"It doesn't really matter how fast you are at the bottom end; just raw speed. If you can't tap into that at the end of a race, it's not going to do you a lot of good."



T&FN: Taking one specific example from this season, you targeted the American Record in the 10,000 at the Jordan Invitational. Chris Solinsky got the record instead even though you ran under the old AR. What are your thoughts on that race?

Rupp: I was obviously disappointed afterwards just because I got beat and didn't get the record but after about a week when you start thinking more rationally about it, I still ran the time, I got under the old American Record, which, if you take Chris and the other guys that finished ahead of me out of the picture, just looking at that, beforehand that would have been a successful race.

So obviously it definitely stinks to get beat but if you take those people out of it, because you can't really control them, when you look at it, it was still a successful performance, I think.

We learned a lot, just tactically. I was kind of I think in a tough spot because afterwards I was just talking with Chris. It was his first 10K and he said he had a lot of doubts in the middle of it and he would have been content running 27:30 going into that race.

It just happened to be a really fast one and he felt good and could keep going, but I think that if I didn't push the pace there after the rabbits dropped out that it probably would have slowed down. Looking back at it, there wasn't much I could have done. He was just faster that day. That was flying.

But it's good to see him. He's a good friend and obviously we see each other a bunch just training out here in Portland. After that initial sting everything was just fine. You just move forward from it and keep building up for the next time.

T&FN: What's up for the coming winter? Will you run indoors, cross country, or even outdoors Down Under in Australia?

Rupp: I'm not sure about cross country—we haven't really talked about that—but I'll

definitely be running indoors. January, February; we'll find some races in there. That's kind of the next big thing that we're training for and I'm going to peak for.

I don't really know what's after that in terms of the schedule. We'll probably take a little bit of a break and then gear up for outdoors and running late into the summer.

T&FN: You've had a unique career. You're almost the party of one in U.S. distance running in that you've had the same coach since you began your high school career and he happens to have

Improving The Mechanics

For a couple years now, at least, Galen Rupp and coach Alberto Salazar have made a priority out of improving Rupp's running mechanics to develop a faster kick and increased efficiency.

While the effort has shown positively in Rupp's form, Salazar said publicly recently that an increased emphasis on building volume back into training will be a part of the plan for '11. We asked for Rupp for his take on that:

"Improving the volume is going to be a good part, and I think that will actually help a lot with my ability to finish at the end. When we look back, I don't think I was doing enough this year.

"I won't give any numbers out, but as far as what I was running in miles per week, it was definitely lower even than I'd been the last couple years and not close to where a lot of the other top guys were.

"It doesn't really matter how fast you are at the bottom end; just raw speed. If you can't tap into that at the end of a race, it's not going to do you a lot of good.

"If it did, Usain Bolt would be the best marathon runner in the world because obviously he could outkick anybody but he doesn't have the strength to do it. So I think that was part of why I didn't close that well this last year, but we'll still continue working on really short, sprint-like workouts.

"You can always improve your form; I don't think you can ever get perfect on that. So we'll stay with that and we've just got to do a better job of adding volume.

"Obviously we won't go crazy because if you add it too much you run the real high risk of getting hurt. We've just got to be smart about it but I've got all the faith in the world in Alberto and I know we'll get it done."

world-class running experience himself.

Rupp: Just lucky, I guess. I believe stuff always happens for a reason so for whatever reason brought us together when I was in high school, it was just meant to be.

We obviously have a great relationship and I always think I lucked out with getting one of the best coaches in the world. It's been pretty easy to not have to worry about coaching so I love it. I have been with Alberto and I'll be with him until I'm done running.

I think having that continuity is probably a big reason that I've been successful and have been able to perform well ever since I was in

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Galen Rupp

high school.

When you have that continuity and you're always on that same program, you've got those benchmark workouts that you can go back and look at: I ran 4:40 for the mile in this workout when I was in high school and now I'm down to running them in 4:20 or something.

It's easy to track progress and I guess I think it's a good thing for everybody. A lot of those Kenyans, they have the same coach from when they start getting serious. It's a big part, I think, of why a lot of people are successful.

T&FN: *Is there any workout you particularly look forward to just because it's fun?*

Rupp: As far as workouts, I like doing quarters a lot for whatever reason. Mile repeats is something that we've done going back to high school, and when I look back and see how I've progressed doing those, I like looking back at it and seeing how far you've come. And I like doing mile repeats.

Tempo runs I hate with a passion. Those are my least-favorite thing to do—long, hard tempo runs. I hate them.

T&FN: *Does this mean we'll never see you in the marathon?*

Rupp: It definitely doesn't mean that. I don't think we've ever really done them that consistently. We definitely do them a lot but probably not as much as we probably should. So that's one of the things that we'll probably improve this year. I've just never been that great at them.

T&FN: *Galen Rupp's not good at something in running. That's a little hard to believe. Anyway, now you've got world-class training partners in Webb and Ritzenheim. One's a miler, the other a marathoner. Sounds perfect for you, being the guy in between.*

What about personalities? Do you have a good mix in your group?

Rupp: I think we have just real similar personalities, all three of us. We get along really well. Those are guys that I could hang out with regardless of whether they were runners or not. Having them where we can hang out and we're really close friends and we can talk about stuff besides track is really cool.

T&FN: *What kind of things do you do together off the track?*

Rupp: We don't really do a whole lot. Training just takes up so much of our days. We'll talk about stuff, whether it's movies or TV or just anything that comes up.

Alan and I will play PlayStation every once in a while with each other.

T&FN: *What games do you play?*

Rupp: We play some army game. *Modern Warfare*, I think, or something like that. And I've got *NCAA Football* and he's a huge football fan so we'll probably hit that and start playing with each other on there.

I think it's good that he went to Michigan

because I can just talk a whole lot because Oregon beat them the last two times they played, and obviously the Ducks have a great team this year.

Even with Jerry's guys, the Wisconsin connection that they have. I've got to live it up while I can.

T&FN: *I've heard Solinsky talk about the Packers and having to get Sunday long runs in earlier in the fall now that they're in Portland in order to be finished by Packer game time. Are you an NFL fan?*

Rupp: The Ducks are definitely No. 1 for

Rupp's Advice Corner

In a recent issue of *Sports Illustrated*, former 800 great Johnny Gray predicted that Galen Rupp's Oregon teammate, Andrew Wheating, can break the World Record in the 1500.

Noting that it's not easy to carry predictions from others on your shoulders, we asked Rupp how he would tell Wheating to approach that:

"I would just say that, especially with the season he had, expectations are going to be unbelievably high and people will say a lot of this and that. But you kind of have to take a step back sometimes and put it all in perspective. Things aren't always going to go perfect.

"You have those expectations now and that's great to have them but you can't let those get you down when things don't go great.

"I think Andrew's going to be fine, though. He has great people around him. I think Vin [Lananna] obviously has dealt with a lot of high-level elite athletes before, so he knows—I'm sure—what Andrew is going through in terms of expectations and what people are thinking or will want from him. But I think as long as you surround yourself with great people and always stay true to yourself...

"You probably know Andrew. That's not going to be a problem with him. He's able to stay really relaxed and all that. I think he's going to do great. Again, you've just got to take a step back sometimes and just be realistic about it.

"If you get the World Record some day, that's great, but as long as you're continuing to improve and have that long-term vision—which the people around him definitely have and he probably has too—he'll be fine."

me but I love the Bears. My dad and his whole family are from Chicago. So I grew up liking all the Chicago teams with the exception of the Bulls because we have the Blazers out here in Portland. But all the other Chicago teams, ever since I was a baby, my dad and I would watch the games together.

T&FN: *Cubs or White Sox in baseball? You're not allowed to like both, are you?*

Rupp: I don't hate the White Sox. I don't know. I don't think you're technically supposed to like them both but I just follow the Cubs; I don't follow the White Sox at all.

But I'm definitely a Cubs fan, unfortunately. □