



## MEN'S TRACK & FIELD

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### Riberto Making Way For Flames' Cross Country Team

Senior Russ Riberto is looking to end his running career in stellar fashion.

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By [Shawn Sullivan](#)

The easy-listening tunes of The Dave Matthews Band, penetrates [Russ Riberto's](#) ears through his Walkman. His face is numb from emotion, his eyes are focused on the task at hand.

The Oak Lawn native isn't thinking about the landscape business he owns and operates, and he is not concerning himself with his idol, running icon Steve Prefontaine.

The environment he has surrounded himself in can mean only one thing...its race day.

"When its race time, everything is there for me mentally," said Riberto. "There is only one thing on my mind and I just go after people. The adrenaline is firing through my veins."

The old adage, 'You perform how you practice' doesn't hold true for Riberto and he will tell you that.

Watching him in practice-mode might give you a warped perception of this fiery competitor. But once the gun goes off, Riberto's intensity is tough to match.

"In practice its not like I'm competing against my teammates, you know," Riberto explained. "But I feel this year in practice I have been more focused than in the past."

Two years ago, Riberto strung together a fantastic season, heralded as the team's MVP in 1999. Last season, Riberto

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Senior Russ Riberto is cruising through his senior cross country season.

completed a solid season, but never felt like he put it all together. The Flames finished up last season a disappointing fifth in the then Midwestern Collegiate Conference.

Now, as the conference has changed names to Horizon League, Riberto and the Flames look to change their fortunes as well.

Along with fellow captain [Danny Smith](#), Riberto has implemented a few changes that will hopefully improve the overall character of the team. A graduate of Marist-which has a long and successful tradition of running-Riberto believed a few minor things could make a big difference.

"In high school we really pushed the team aspect," said Riberto. "I'm trying to bring some of the ideas we had there to UIC to help build a better team-bond."

Riberto was a large part of a Marist squad that garnered third-place in the Illinois Class AA State Meet when he was a junior. He also enjoyed success his senior season, concluding in a 29th place effort individually that season at the State Meet, just four places shy of All-State status. Although he doesn't ache with regret being so close to the elusive top-25, Riberto was able to learn from the events during his senior year at the State Meet.

"I don't regret what happened my senior year finishing 29th," Riberto said. "But there are things I could have done that would have helped me become All-State. In this, another senior season, I'm trying to focus on not leaving anything behind because this is my last shot."

Riberto will end his stellar running career in November with many endearing memories of team trips, practices and his forte, big races. Although his life as a competitive runner may be nearing the culmination, Riberto feels no haste towards that fact. Actually, he is looking forward to the future that lies ahead.

"I say in about five years, I'll have put on a little weight," said Riberto. "But possibly I'll knock the dust off my running shoes and remember the nine years of running that were so good to me."

As for the present, Riberto will lead his mates through the remainder of the racing ledger for 2001. With hearty competition ahead at the Illini Open this weekend, the Loyola Lakefront Invite and the Notre Dame Invitational and the Horizon league Championships down the road, he is aware the Flames have their work cut out for them.

But [Russ Riberto](#) won't leave anything to question.

It will all be left out on the course.

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