

# Track and Field



*NCAA Championships*



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### *The Challenge: Beat USC*

The National Collegiate Athletic Association conducts championships in track and field on each divisional level—Division I (major colleges), Division II (mid-size colleges) and Division III (small colleges).

In no other sport is the difference in quality of athletes so marked between the divisions as it is in this one. In order to qualify for the end-of-season championship meet, individuals must run certain times or jump certain distances; these are called qualifying standards. The differences among the three divisions are shown in the standards. While a sprinter can qualify for the Division III championships with a 9.8 100-yard-dash time and 9.7 seconds for the Division II meet, it takes a 9.4 time to qualify for the Division I title competition. An added feature of the Division I championships—one making them the true college title meet—is that winners of the Division II and Division III events are invited to compete in their specialties in the major-college meet. The history of the track and field championships reaches back to 1921, making it the longest-running col-

legiate title event originated with and held by the NCAA. In the 56 years of major-college track and field, the title has been won by the University of Southern California 26 times! USC won the title seven years in a row in the years 1949-1955, spectacular when you consider that athletes are only eligible for four years. The Trojans have had 88 individual event champions; next closest is Ohio State, with 38.

The NCAA meet's history is dotted with names that live as greats in the history of the sport. For instance, the record holder for most individual titles, career, is Jesse Owens of Ohio State. In two years of competition, Owens won *eight* titles—foreshadowing his famous gold-medal-winning performance in the 1936 Munich Olympics. Another famous name topping the NCAA record lists is Steve Prefontaine of Oregon, a great distance runner. Prefontaine is the only man ever to repeat four times as champion of a single NCAA championship meet event (three-mile run), 1970-71-72-73.

*Steve Prefontaine was a four-time NCAA champion*