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PATRIOTS RECLAIM CHAMPIONSHIPS

By John Manasso
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Led by all-American miler Julius Achon, the George Mason University men's track and field team won the Intercollegiate Amateur Athletic Association of America championship for the eighth time in nine years yesterday at George Mason.

Achon, a junior from Uganda, outsprinted Mount St. Mary's Daniel Kinyua of Kenya to win the 1,500-meter run, then anchored the Patriots to a meet-record victory in the 4x800 relay.

George Mason's women's team also succeeded, as all-American Tamika Powell established a meet and Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference record in the hammer throw and the Patriots easily won their fourth consecutive ECAC title. On Saturday, Powell finished second in the discus.

There are 80 schools in the ECAC and 101 in the IC4A, but none could keep up with the Patriots. The women's team totaled 117 points, swamping second-place Pittsburgh, which got 37 of its 65 points from Trecia Smith, who will compete in the heptathlon in the NCAA championships. On Saturday, she set the meet record in the long jump, won the high jump and finished eighth in the javelin. Yesterday, she won the triple jump and finished third in the shot put. Georgetown and Virginia tied for third with 52 points, with Hoyas senior Miesha Marzell successfully defending her title in the women's 800 in a meet record of 2 minutes 2.36 seconds.

The George Mason men finished with 98 points -- 27 more than second-place and defending champion Liberty, 28 more than Georgetown.

"This meet is always very special to us," said George Mason men's coach John Cook. "We wouldn't have anchored Julius Achon in the 4x800 if it weren't. It's a big championship for our school. To us, it signifies the championship of the East. We load up for this."

The George Mason men had first-place finishes in the 4x100 relay, the 110 hurdles (Maurice Wignall, who also was part of the 4x100 relay team), and triple jump (former H.D. Woodson All-Met Asha Porter). In the men's 400 hurdles, George Mason's Ian Weakly, who ran the fastest collegiate time this year in that event in Saturday's trials (48.83 seconds), appeared to have won in the final yesterday with a faster time. However, he was disqualified for a trail leg violation, meaning his trail leg went around the side of a hurdle instead of completely coming over the top. As a result, Villanova's Kareem Archer won the event in 48.80.

But the victory George Mason's men desired most was in the 4x800. They lost to Georgetown in that event at last year's IC4A meet and this year's Penn Relays. "We wanted to redeem ourselves," Cook said. The Patriots' O'Neil Duncan, Miklos Arpasi, Sammy Biwott and Achon did that in style, winning in 7:19.94. Georgetown was second in 7:23.24.

Earlier in the day, Achon also won a personal duel with Kinyua.

He said he gained some satisfaction from beating a runner from a neighboring country and because Kenyans "dominate the world" in track.

"Nobody beats them," Achon said. "They still believe I'm from Kenya, not Uganda, because Uganda has never produced a distance runner." Achon said he was undeterred when Kinyua withstood his first attempt to pass with about 300 yards left. But on the final turn, 100 meters from the finish line, Achon -- in full sprint -- overtook Kinyua.

"He was insisting on staying in front," said Achon. "When I tried to make him move, he would not let me, so I let him go. I tried to surprise him a little bit at the end." CAPTION: Julius Achon (left) zips past Mount St. Mary's Daniel Kinyua in the final strides of the 1,500-meter run to help rack up points for George Mason. The Patriots also won the 4x100, 4x800, 110-meter hurdles and triple jump to top second-place and defending champion Liberty by 27 points. Meanwhile, Morgan State's Ameerah Bello (above) had things all to herself in winning the 100-meter dash in 11.60 seconds.