

# ATHLETIC STARS SHINE BRIGHT

BY ERIC BURDICK



(Above) Sharon Day, (Top R) Chad Mendes, (Bottom R) Phillip Reid

CHAD MENDES GRAPPLES. Sharon Day jumps. Phillip Reid runs.

They are the epitome of athletic success at Cal Poly.

They also have overcome serious injuries that occurred midway through their Mustang careers.

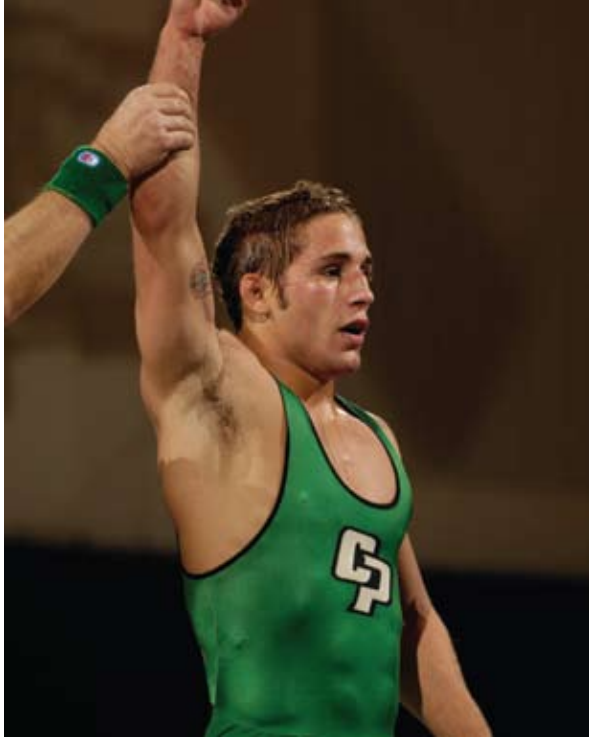
Mendes injured a knee early in his junior wrestling season after competing in just seven matches. He was forced to sit out the rest of the 2006-07 campaign.

Day fractured her foot prior to the 2006 track and field season and did not compete in that sport or the 2006 women's soccer campaign.

Reid suffered a stress fracture in his right femur in the spring of 2005 and missed much of that year's track and field season.

But all three have returned to the level of success enjoyed prior to their injuries, particularly on the national scene and, for Day, perhaps a shot at competing in the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China.

Day, a senior kinesiology major from Costa Mesa, Calif., won the NCAA Division I high jump in 2005 with a personal-best mark of 6 feet, 4 inches, which still stands as the school record. After redshirting the 2006 season, Day came back to finish fourth at the 2007 NAAs, was second at the U.S. Outdoor Track and Field Championships, and sixth at the Pan-American Games in Rio de Janeiro.



She has a pair of Big West titles to her credit in the high jump and, as a freshman in 2004, finished second in both the Big West and NCAA championships. During her final season of track and field this spring, Day needs to post a mark of 6-4 3/4 to qualify for the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials in Eugene, Ore.

"Sharon has been a great role model for all Cal Poly athletes by being a committed team player and having been the top athlete on the soccer and track team while overcoming a serious injury," said track and field Director Terry Crawford. "She is a quiet leader who leads by example, but is a ferocious competitor who hates to lose."

Day was one of Cal Poly's most outstanding players in the 16-year history of the university's women's soccer program. Twice she earned All-Big West first-team honors, and she was a second-team selection in her other two seasons. Day scored 27 goals in four seasons, including 11 as a sophomore in 2004, adding 14 assists for 68 total points. She was third-team All-West Region as a sophomore and Big West Freshman of the Year in 2003, leading the Mustangs into the NCAA playoffs both seasons.

Reid, also a senior kinesiology major from Oxnard, Calif., has made his mark in distance running events.

In cross country, he is a two-time NCAA All-American, placing 21st in the 2006 nationals and 33rd last fall. Reid led the Mustangs to a 13th-place national finish as a junior and 11th place as a senior. In 2004 Reid placed 60th as a freshman and helped Cal Poly to a 10th-place team finish, its highest ever at the nationals. He won back-to-back Big West individual titles in 2006 and 2007, leading the Mustangs to their fourth and fifth consecutive conference team championships. Twice he was named Big West Conference Cross Country Athlete of the Year.

Reid also has made his mark in track and field. Last spring he shattered a 29-year-old Big West Conference record in the 1,500-meter run with a winning time of 3 minutes, 42.54 seconds, No. 3 all-time at Cal Poly and surpassing the "B" standard for the U.S. Olympic Trials. He also holds the No. 2 mark in the two-mile (8:41.59) and No. 4 in the 5,000 (14:01.58).

Reid advanced to the NCAA National Championships in the 1,500 last spring, but did not advance beyond the prelims. He also won the Big West 1,500 in 2006, but didn't reach the nationals.

"Phillip has been extremely coachable," said cross country Head Coach Mark Conover. "He has put his complete faith and trust in his coaching, allowing him to focus on managing his own life and daily routine without wondering how he will develop as a runner. He understands progression and delayed gratification when it comes to his training and racing. That means he is able to persevere through injuries, good workouts and bad workouts – he is able to keep his focus on what lies ahead. He ran faster each year and now is embarking on his post-collegiate career."

Mendes started his sophomore season by winning his first eight matches, posted a 21-5 overall record, won a Pacific-10 Conference title, and finished sixth in the NCAA Championships, earning All-American honors. His junior year is something he'd rather forget, but it apparently has only made him stronger.

The senior kinesiology major from Hanford, Calif., won his first 21 matches this season with six falls and, by the middle of February, was ranked No. 1 in the nation at 141 pounds by InterMat.com for four consecutive weeks.

"I believe the key to Chad's success has been his great attitude and hard work," said wrestling Head Coach John Azevedo. "During his first couple years at Cal Poly, Chad struggled academically and wasn't sure if he wanted to keep going to school and wrestling."

"Chad decided to give it another year and began to work harder and smarter on his academics," Azevedo added. "With the extra effort, Chad began to have success academically and grow in confidence and maturity. Chad's great attitude and hard work have helped him be on the honor roll and an NCAA All-American."

He is Cal Poly's first top-ranked wrestler since 1980 and, at the NCAA Championships in March at St. Louis, will attempt to become the third Mustang ever to capture a Division I national title, following in the footsteps of Tom Kline (191 pounds, 1969) and Mark DiGirolamo (118 pounds, 1976). □

