

# ▶▶ SPORTS NEWS



(Drawing courtesy of RRM Design Group and Ellerbe Becket)

## ▶▶ Score One for the Stadium Major Renovation Planned

**T**hanks to the generosity of Cal Poly alumnus Alex Spanos and his wife, Faye (*see story, page 4*), Cal Poly is moving forward with plans to renovate the stadium, the university's facility for football, men's and women's soccer and events such as commencement.

The Spanos's \$4-million commitment – the largest single gift in the history of Cal Poly Athletics – will help fund the first phase of the renovation. In recognition of the gift, the stadium has been renamed the Alex G. Spanos Stadium.

The initial project will increase the permanent seating capacity from about 8,500 to 10,000 and includes a press box with special box seating, a press area, television and radio booths, two coaching booths, new stadium lighting and an

upgrade of the playing surface.

The renovation also includes plans to honor all of the members of the 1960 football team who perished in a tragic plane crash in Ohio. "Cal Poly plans to create a Memorial Plaza to ensure permanent remembrance of the 1960 team members

entrance, this plaza will be a constant reminder to students, alumni and visitors," Baker added. "We feel that permanent recognition on the Cal Poly campus of the young men who lost their lives is long overdue."

The Spanos's gift, along with a prior

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who lost their lives," said Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker.

The Memorial Plaza will honor each player with a biographical plaque affixed to a copper pillar standing at the height of the player. "As the focal point of the stadium

gift from alumnus **Richard O'Neill (ASCI '48)**, has provided important momentum for ongoing efforts to secure the funds required to develop a high-quality venue. Groundbreaking is expected in early summer 2005.



# ► Training The Triathlete

BY FRED DREIER



Victor Plata (Photo by Rachel E. Bayne, The Bellingham Herald)

To understand how **Victor Plata** (SOCS '97) evolved from a mediocre collegiate runner and swimmer to an Olympian and elite professional triathlete, one need not look further than his daily regimen.

Plata rises early and churns out several thousand yards in a two-hour swim practice. After a meal and a rest, he spins along the Central Coast for two to four hours on his bike, then finishes up with another one to two hours running, some stretches, dinner, then bed. It's a schedule that is built on physical and emotional dedication.

Plata says this dedication – it didn't come overnight – became engrained in him during his undergraduate years at Cal Poly, during which he competed for the track, swimming and cycling teams, worked almost full time, won several academic awards, and captured the National Collegiate Triathlon title.

"All of my college years were spent training, studying or working. I think I

went on one date, and to one party – the swim team's New Year's party," Plata says. "You know, I was a total geek. Well, I suppose I'm still a total geek."

Plata competed with the track team his freshman year. After a coaching shake-up, he quit and took some time off, traveling to South America to reunite with his

**"VICTOR WOULD WRITE HIS GOALS DOWN AND PUT THEM ON OBJECTS AROUND THE HOUSE. IT'S SOMETHING YOU DON'T SEE TOO MUCH IN SPORTS."**

estranged father. When he returned to Cal Poly, a friend persuaded him to join the swim team.

"I was definitely one of the slowest guys on the team," Plata recalls. "I got better over time, I just had to set some goals."

It wasn't long before Plata the runner and swimmer picked up triathlon. At his first competition, the 1995 Wildflower race, Plata came in fifth. Realizing that he

needed some serious bike training, he joined the cycling team. When he returned to the Wildflower Collegiate Championships in 1997, Plata walked away with the national championship.

"That moment was special. It proved that I was capable of achieving any goal I wanted to set," he says. "That was also the first time I seriously thought it was possible to make the Olympics."

It would take eight long years of sacrifice before Plata realized this goal. Along the way he suffered serious injuries after being hit by a truck, attacked by a Rottweiler and llama, and falling into poison ivy. The last injury shook up his training before the 2000 Olympic trials, at which Plata came in fourth – one spot short of the Olympic team.

After the 2000 games, Plata decided to give it one more shot, putting his plan to enter law school on hold. He finally achieved this goal at the Olympic Trials in Bellingham, Wash., in June, when he captured the last spot.

Randy Warren, who coached Plata on

the Cal Poly Wheelman cycling team, said Plata's dedication to setting and chasing goals is what has gotten him so far.

"Victor would write his goals down and put them on objects around the house. It's something you don't see too much in sports," he said. "Here is a guy who had some talent but was totally committed to whatever he did. Without that drive he would have been just another triathlete." ■