



Brant TOLSMMA

Head Coach
 23rd Year at Liberty
 Newark Coll. of Engineering, '71
*11-Time Big South
 Cross Country
 Coach of the Year*



(L-R): Nancy, Tami and Brant Tolsma

Entering his 23rd year at Liberty, Brant Tolsma is the head coach of the men's and women's cross country and track and field teams. He was brought to Liberty in 1986 by former Liberty track and field coach, Jake Matthes, to serve as the head men's track and field coach. By 1991, Tolsma had assumed each of the coaching positions he still holds today.

Under Tolsma's guidance, the Liberty program has enjoyed considerable success. The cross country and track and field teams have won 72 conference titles since his arrival on campus, including four Big South championships and an IC4A outdoor title during the 2007-08 academic year.

Tolsma has won 38 Big South Coach of the Year honors and twice was named the NCAA District Coach of the Year. His athletes have earned 34 All-America honors since the program moved to the NCAA Division I level in 1989.

Two of his student-athletes have captured individual national titles. Heather (Sagan) Zealand won the mile at the 2002 NCAA Division I Indoor Track & Field Championships, while Josh McDougal crossed the line first at the 2007 NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships.

Tolsma's student-athletes have also excelled in the classroom during his tenure at Liberty. Last season, his son-in-law, senior Clendon Henderson, was a first-team ESPN The Magazine Academic All-American. Henderson became the sixth Liberty cross country or track and field athlete to earn Academic All-America status under Tolsma's direction.

Tolsma's coaching career began at Campbell University in Buies Creek, N.C. He served as the head cross country and track and field coach there for seven years. During his time as a collegiate head coach, 20 of his athletes have represented the USA in international competitions.

Tolsma completed his undergraduate work with summa cum laude distinction in 1971 at Newark College of Engineering, since renamed New Jersey Institute of Technology. He went on to earn a master's degree in hydraulic engineering from the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. in the biomechanics of sport from Indiana University. Tolsma's doctoral dissertation was entitled Leg Dynamics of Maximum Speed Sprinting.

Tolsma has published several articles about track and field training and released a book, *The Surrendered Christian Athlete*, which expounds the role of the Christian faith in athletics. He has also designed several athletic training devices.

When he can find time, Tolsma still actively trains and competes in track and field. He won his age group in the Masters National Decathlon Championship in 1993 and in 2003. He placed second at the World Veterans Games decathlon in 1995 and at the 2002 World Double-Decathlon Championship in Finland.

Tolsma twice held the world record for men over 50 in the double decathlon, a two-day, 20-event competition which includes all of the track and field disciplines. In October 2007, Tolsma broke his age group's world record for the one-day double decathlon, at the Matthes-Hopkins Track Complex.

Currently serving as president of the International Association of Ultra Multi-events, Tolsma has raced nearly every competitive distance from 50 meters to 50 miles. The latter he did to celebrate reaching age 50.

Tolsma enjoys a number of sports and fitness activities, especially water-skiing and springboard diving. Nancy, his wife of 33 years, is the mother of his six children, Michelle, who is married to former Liberty tennis player Matthew Schley, Rachel, Brenda, who is married to current assistant track and field coach Clendon Henderson, Regina, Joey and Tami, a freshman on the Liberty women's track and field team. Tolsma has two grandsons, Jacob and Bradon, as well as a granddaughter, Eliana.

Tolsma By The Numbers

- 2
- Number of NCAA Division I national champions he has coached.
- 6
- Number of children he and his wife of 33 years, Nancy, have raised.
- 38
- Number of Big South Coach of the Year awards he has won, including cross country and track & field.
- 72
- Number of conference titles his Liberty teams have won.



**Heather
ZEALAND**
Assistant Coach
7th Year at Liberty
Liberty, '02

Heather Zealand is in her seventh year on Liberty's cross country and track and field coaching staff. The native of Warrenton, Va., joined the staff after becoming the most prolific women's cross country and track and field athlete in program history.

Since Zealand has been on staff, the Liberty men's and women's cross country squads have combined to win five Big South titles. In addition to aiding the team's distance corps, Zealand coordinates team travel and other budget-related issues.

2002 was Zealand's finest year as a runner. She became Liberty's first NCAA Division I national champion, capturing the national title in the mile at the indoor track and field championship meet. Her time of 4:38.52 set Liberty and Big South Conference records.

Zealand was also the first Liberty athlete to win an ECAC title, winning the mile at the event.

In the track and field season of the same year, Zealand was undefeated in the 800 meters, the 1500 meters and the mile until finishing as the national runner-up in the 1,500 at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships. Along the way, Zealand became the first collegiate winner of the Penn Relays Olympic Development mile since Vicki Huber in 1987.

The year brought numerous accolades, including Big South Women's Athlete of the Year, Big South Track and Field Athlete of the Year and First-Team Verizon Academic All-American. Zealand was selected the 2001-02 Rock Royer/Mack Rivera Award honoree, garnering Liberty's highest athletic honor. She was honored by the United States Track Coaches Association as the 2002 Division I Track and Field Scholar-Athlete of the Year. Zealand also represented Virginia for the 2002 Woman of the Year Award.

After graduating from Liberty with a bachelor's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language in 2002, Zealand began to compete professionally for Adidas. She traveled to the 2003 World Cross Country Championships, where she was the second American to finish. She placed fourth behind Regina Jacobs' world record in the indoor 1,500 meters and ran a 4:29 road mile in Austin, Texas.

In 2004, Zealand made the finals of the U.S. Olympic Trials in the 1,500 meters. She ran a 4:10.37 in the prelims at the event.

Zealand is married to former Flames runner Josh Zealand and the couple has a daughter, Alyssa (2) and a son, William (born in July 2008).



**David
CHEROMEI**
Graduate Assistant
2nd Year at Liberty
Virginia Intermont, '07

David Cheromei, a highly-decorated distance runner at Virginia Intermont, returns for his second year on the Liberty cross country/track and field coaching staff as a graduate assistant.

Last season, Cheromei helped oversee the greatest cross country season in Liberty history, as the Flames and Lady Flames swept the Big South titles and Josh McDougal captured the NCAA National Cross Country Championship.

His own year of competition was highlighted by receiving an invitation to compete in the 3,000-meter steeplechase at the 2008 Kenya Olympic Trials. Cheromei finished in the top 20 of an event in which Kenyan athletes have won the gold medal at each of the last seven Olympic Games.

Cheromei won 10 NAIA national titles at Virginia Intermont, including three straight championships in his specialty, the 3,000-meter steeplechase. He became the third runner in the history of the NAIA meet to capture three consecutive steeplechase crowns and set a meet record (8:40.03) as a senior in 2007.

Cheromei also won the 5,000-meter championship at the 2006 and 2007 NAIA Outdoor Track & Field Championships, earning the meet's Outstanding Performer honor both seasons.

Cheromei was a part of a Virginia Intermont men's cross country squad which won three straight NAIA national team titles (2004-06). He was the individual national champion in 2006.

Indoors, Cheromei took home the 2005 national title at 5,000 meters and won the 3,000-meter crown in both 2006 and 2007. He was also a part of Virginia Intermont's first-place distance medley relay squad in 2006.

The native of Eldoret, Kenya opened his collegiate career at Butler Community College in 2004. He won NJCAA indoor national titles in the mile and 5,000 meters and took the outdoor steeplechase crown in his lone year at the institution.

Running seems to be in Cheromei's blood, as his sister Lydia Cheromei finished second at the 2004 World Half Marathon Championships. He is also the cousin of Paul Tergat, former world record holder in the marathon.

A member of Athletes in Action, Cheromei is engaged to be married to Laurel Moore in December 2008.