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A Season Interrupted: Reflections from Track & Field Senior Olivia Stein

Ben Wiley, Author

Thousands of collegiate athletes across the United States had their spring seasons abruptly canceled due to the health risks presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. This sudden end is especially brutal for seniors, as it deprives them of the opportunity to compete in their final season of collegiate athletics.

At Seattle University, spring sports faced the largest disruption, with softball and baseball never making it to conference games and the track and field team having yet to begin the outdoor portion of their 2020 schedule. As a result, Redshirt Senior Olivia Stein, who specializes in the distance events, and the rest of her teammates were unable to build on their indoor season and reach their goals this spring. Stein, in particular, was looking forward to the 2020 outdoor season, wanting to end her Seattle U cross country and track career on a high note.



Photo via Seattle U Athletics

Olivia Stein races in the UW Indoor Preview on Jan. 18, 2020

BW: What was your initial reaction when you found out that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all spring sports were canceled?

OS: The rest of spring season being cancelled was really heartbreaking and challenging to comprehend. It's because this was my last year of eligibility, so I knew that after this year, my NCAA track career would be over.

BW: Did you have any big personal or team goals for Seattle U track in the 2020 outdoor season? What events were you planning on running?

OS: I had a lot of success my junior year in track and cross country, then I redshirted a year. Spring was going to be my last time competing on the track. I was really excited to see what my teammates and I were going to do on the track this spring as the program has grown a lot since I first came in five years ago. This year, I was planning on running the 10,000 meter and the 5k races.

BW: Have you heard of the potential extra year of eligibility that NCAA is granting to spring athletes who have had their seasons cut short? What do you think about it?

OS: I have heard of this issue and know that as of right now, NCAA is going to grant an extra year of eligibility. I think that it is great that they are allowing students to come back. However, what is challenging is that scholarship money has often already been dispersed to freshman recruits, so students taking advantage of the extra year may not have the same amount of scholarship money available.

BW: Have you given any thought into accepting the extra year?

OS: I am currently in the master's of teaching program here at Seattle U as a grad student. I will be done with my degree in August, so there is not a way that I can make it work. I want to start applying to teach at a high school and help coach the next generation of track athletes.

BW: Reflecting back on your collegiate career, how has your experience been as an Seattle U student athlete?

OS: Being an athlete on the cross country and track team has been the highlight of my time at Seattle U. In the past five years, I have had the opportunity to work with great coaches, teammates, staff and personal trainers.

BW: What has been the highlight of your career for Seattle U cross country and track and field?

OS: One of my favorite memories of track and field was the conference championship three years ago. I finished third in the 5k, then the men's and women's teams each won their distance medley relays. Them winning created a great atmosphere and everyone was excited.

BW: What will you miss the most about being part of Seattle U Athletics?

OS: I will miss my teammates and coaches the most, especially my head coach who I have formed a really good relationship with and will keep in contact.

BW: What has inspired your love for and success in this sport?

OS: I love the cross country and track and field community. It is something that anyone can do as you do not have to be great to be a runner.

BW: Have you given any thought into continuing to run competitively after college?

OS: I have been running to stay active and get out these days. I have talked to a few people about continuing to compete after college, but that won't likely be for a few years. I hopefully one day want to be competing again.

The sudden interruption and cancellation of student-athletes' seasons across the United States has been a disappointment to many. Although the NCAA has granted student-athletes an additional year of eligibility, the effects of COVID-19 have already made their mark on countless 2020 sports seasons.