



Dathan Ritzenhein talks about his 'passion' for favorite race style



By [Peter J. Wallner | pwallner@mlive.com](#)

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GRAND RAPIDS, MI – Dathan Ritzenhein, who has done a little bit of everything the past year, will start 2013 with one of his first loves Saturday at the [USA Cross Country Championships](#).

Ritzenhein, 30, made the commitment last week to compete in the St. Louis event in his first appearance since October when he turned in a personal best time of 2 hours, 7 minutes, 47 seconds in the [Chicago Marathon – the third fastest ever by an American](#).

The 2001 Rockford graduate, [posting on his blog Monday](#), said cross country racing “has always been a passion of mine.”

“Training has gone well and I can’t think of a better opportunity to get back into racing and start 2013 where I left off last fall. Cross country has always been a passion of mine so getting back onto the mud and grass was an easy choice. I don’t know what it is about cross country but it just feels natural. Some runners hate it, but I have always felt comfortable and that is one reason I always come back every couple years to the USA Cross Country Championships.

“I hope this year I will have a great opportunity to try and add a fourth title to my name and I look forward to the challenge from the young blood in the race as well as those who I have raced against for the last 15 years.”

Ritzenhein said he is “refreshed” and “ready to start the year off with a bang.”

Last year, Ritzenhein reached his third Olympics when he qualified for London in the 10,000 meters. He finished 13th in 27:45.89. It was a circuitous route to the Games.

Ritzenhein earlier in 2012 fell just short of qualifying in the marathon (he was fourth), then ran 3,000- and 5,000-meter races before qualifying in the 10,000 just over a month before the Games began.

Ritzenhein has a successful past in cross country. He won the NCAA Cross Country title in college as well as a bronze medal at the 2001 IAAF World Junior Championships. He also captured back-to-back Foot Locker National High School titles in 1999 and 2000 while at Rockford.

To get in touch with Pete Wallner: [email](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

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