

XC-SPI: 2026 Preseason Individual Championship Prior and Athlete-by-Athlete Evidence Appendix

Preseason evidence tiers; no fabricated probabilities

Colin C. Caso

Oklahoma State University

August 28, 2026

Abstract

This appendix identifies the athletes with the strongest auditable preseason cases for the 2026 NCAA individual titles. Because the historical athlete model has not yet completed chronological probability calibration, Week 0 uses transparent evidence tiers rather than manufactured title percentages. Tiers combine directly comparable 2025 NCAA XC evidence, current roster status, and 2026 track evidence used as a fitness signal rather than a cross-country conversion.

1. Tier Rule

A Favorite/Co-Favorite requires championship-level 2025 XC evidence plus current national-class evidence and verified collegiate status. Primary Contenders have top-level XC evidence with current support but a slightly weaker combined case. Contenders have plausible title ceilings supported by either top-20 XC plus track confirmation or a major 2026 track jump. A track-driven contender may be included without a 2025 NCAA XC finish, but the missing XC evidence must be stated explicitly.

2. Men

Tier		Athlete	Team	2025 NCAA XC	2026 evidence	Grade
Favorite		Rocky Hansen	Wake Forest	2	2nd, NCAA outdoor 5000	A
Primary Contender	Con-	Solomon Kipchoge	Washington State	3	XC-led; current roster	A
Primary Contender	Con-	Brian Musau	Oklahoma State	4	6th, NCAA outdoor 5000	A
Primary Contender	Con-	Denis Kipngetich	Oklahoma State	6	4th 10,000; 11th 5000	A
Contender		Dismus Lokira	Alabama	11	5th, NCAA outdoor 10,000	A
Contender		Robin Kwemoi Bera	Iowa State	15	10th, NCAA outdoor 5000	A
Contender		Evans Kurui	Washington State	17	9th, NCAA outdoor 5000	A
Contender		Elsingi Kipruto	Louisville	39	3rd 5000; 2nd 10,000	A

Rocky Hansen – Favorite. Second at 2025 NCAA XC; second in 2026 NCAA outdoor 5000; verified 2026 roster.

Solomon Kipchoge – Primary Contender. Third at 2025 NCAA XC; verified on 2026 Washington State roster.

Brian Musau – Primary Contender. Fourth at 2025 NCAA XC and sixth in 2026 NCAA outdoor 5000.

Denis Kipnetich – Primary Contender. Sixth at 2025 NCAA XC; fourth in 2026 NCAA outdoor 10,000.

Dismus Lokira – Contender. 11th at NCAA XC; fifth in 2026 NCAA outdoor 10,000; current Alabama roster.

Robin Kwemai Bera – Contender. 15th at NCAA XC and 10th in 2026 NCAA outdoor 5000; current Iowa State roster.

Evans Kurui – Contender. 17th at NCAA XC and ninth in 2026 NCAA outdoor 5000; current roster.

Elsingi Kipruto – Contender. Track season materially raises the prior above his 39th-place 2025 XC result; verified 2026 Louisville roster.

3. Women

Tier	Athlete	Team	2025 NCAA XC	2026 evidence	Grade
Co-Favorite	Doris Lemngole	Alabama	1	Defending XC champion; national-class track	A
Co-Favorite	Jane Hedengren	BYU	2	NCAA indoor 3000/5000 champion; 3rd outdoor 10,000	A
Primary Contender	Riley Chamberlain	BYU	4	NCAA indoor mile/3000 All-American	A
Primary Contender	Hannah Gapes	NC State	5	National-class distance track	A
Primary Contender	Grace Hartman	NC State	6	National-class distance track	A
Primary Contender	Isca Chelangat	Arkansas	7	15:07.76 5000 PB; transfer	A
Contender	Betty Kipkore	Iowa State	15	4th NCAA outdoor 5000 and 10,000	A
Contender	Pamela Kosgei	New Mexico	17	2nd 10,000; 5th 5000	A
Track-Driven Contender	Mercyline Kirwa	Iowa State	DNS	NCAA outdoor 10,000 champion; 2nd 5000	A

Doris Lemngole – Co-Favorite. Defending NCAA XC champion; current Alabama roster.

Jane Hedengren – Co-Favorite. Second at 2025 NCAA XC; dominant 2026 track season; current BYU roster.

Riley Chamberlain – Primary Contender. Fourth at 2025 NCAA XC; current BYU distance roster.

Hannah Gapes – Primary Contender. Fifth at 2025 NCAA XC; current NC State roster.

Grace Hartman – Primary Contender. Sixth at 2025 NCAA XC; current NC State roster.

Isca Chelangat – Primary Contender. Seventh at 2025 NCAA XC; verified transfer to Arkansas.

Betty Kipkore – Contender. Top-15 NCAA XC plus two fourth-place NCAA outdoor finishes.

Pamela Kosgei – Contender. 17th at NCAA XC; second/fifth at 2026 NCAA outdoor championships.

Mercyline Kirwa – Track-Driven Contender. No 2025 NCAA XC finish (DNS), so track evidence raises upside without pretending she has a prior NCAA XC place.

4. Future Probabilistic Output

After historical calibration, the championship simulation can estimate

$$\hat{P}_i(\text{title}) = \frac{1}{M} \sum_{m=1}^M I(P_i^{(m)} = 1), \quad (1)$$

$$\hat{P}_i(\text{podium}) = \frac{1}{M} \sum_{m=1}^M I(P_i^{(m)} \leq 3), \quad (2)$$

$$\hat{P}_i(\text{top10}) = \frac{1}{M} \sum_{m=1}^M I(P_i^{(m)} \leq 10). \quad (3)$$

These use raw overall finish place $P_i^{(m)}$, not NCAA team-scoring place, because individual qualifiers still count in the individual championship. Probabilities will be published only after rolling-origin backtests demonstrate usable calibration.

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