

Cross country champ pursues architecture

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See Emmanuel Rotich earn first-place in the 2018 American Athletic Conference Championships held in Audubon Park on Oct. 25, 2018. (Video from Tulane Athletics)

Emmanuel Rotich never set out to be a competitive cross country runner, yet running was a big part of his life. Growing up in the remote village of Rift Valley, Kenya, he would run to school each morning and back home each evening. In between, he'd run home for lunch and then back to school for afternoon classes.

Each run was 5 kilometers, or just over 3 miles.

It wasn't until he was in high school that he began to see running as something more than a mode of transportation, a dream that he could pursue along with an education in architecture. He found both at Tulane University, where he has been running and drawing since he set foot in New Orleans in 2015.

As one of the most successful cross country runners that Tulane has ever seen, Rotich has earned one award after the other. On Oct. 25, he earned a first-place finish in the 2018 American Athletic Conference Championships at Audubon Park, defending his title from 2017. Rotich was also named the AAC Runner of the Year for the second straight year.

"Winning means a lot to me," Rotich said in an interview between classes just outside Richardson Memorial, home of the Tulane School of Architecture. "When I reflect back on the hard work, the sacrifice, the pressure of defending my title, you've got no other option but to win. That's something I'm proud of."

Rotich traces his passion for architecture to his childhood. He loved drawing houses and buildings and marveled at the finished pieces. "I'd go to someone's house and say, 'Can I draw your house?' And I'd draw it exactly the way it looked."

In addition to his studies and his role as captain of the cross country team, he trains every morning at 6:30 a.m., volunteers for the American Red Cross and works at the Tulane Athletics Fuel Station, a healthy dining outlet where he teaches student-athletes the importance of making smart food choices.

"It took a while to understand the culture of Tulane, the way people interact and just day-to-day life. But I've made a lot of friends. They support me mentally. It means a lot to me when someone tells me, 'Congratulations.' When someone tells me that, it makes me want to go for more."

Rotich will graduate in May 2019 with a bachelor's degree in architecture but will stay at Tulane another year to earn his master's degree in sustainable real estate development. Eventually, he wants to be a real estate developer but says he has a lot more running to do before he settles into a career.

"My goal is to one day be in the Olympics," he said. "There is still a lot to be done. I'm not yet where I want to be."

Editor's note: This article appears in the December 2018 [Tulanian magazine](#).