

# GPSA News



Promoting prominent athletes, sports teams and recreational activities in Pueblo County

VOL. IIII, ISSUE V

05.25.2026

## Mark Your Calendar!

**Come Join the GPSA in 2026 (Membership Fee: \$25)**

**GPSA Meeting Dates for 2026!**

**Aug. 17 | Sept. 28 | Oct. 19**

The Greater Pueblo Sports Association  
54th Annual Celebration  
Wed., Nov., 18, 2026 (6 p.m.)  
CSU-Pueblo Occhiato Student Center Ballroom

## GPSA Gives Jessie Banks and Jim Spanks Blasing Awards at CSUP Athletic Banquet

*(Written for the GPSA by Ben Greenberg, Director of Sports & Communication, CSU Pueblo)*

The Greater Pueblo Sports Association (GPSA) attended the 2026 Wolfies Award hosted by Colorado State University Pueblo Department of Athletics and sponsored by UC Health. The event was held inside the Occhiato Student Center Ballroom on Monday, May 4, with a crowd of 550 people.

ThunderWolves coaches and administrators recognized nearly 90 student-athletes and all 20 athletic teams, and presented awards to 25 student-athletes. The athletic department's SAAC (Student-Athlete Advisory Committee) nominated the award winners and voted on the department's administration staff.

Among the awards handed out were the Jessie Banks Outstanding Senior Female Academic Award and the James "Spank" Blasing Award.

The Jessie Banks Outstanding Senior Female Academic Award was Jady Herra (Track & Field), while the James Spank Blasing Award was shared by Zack Rakowsky (Football) and Evan Smith (Men's Golf)

The association will continue to recognize these athletes in the annual November Induction banquet. A special article of these athletes are featured below. Congratulations to these top athletes!!

### Jady Herra

Jady Herra is a standout distance runner for Colorado State University Pueblo, achieving her career highlight as a two-time NCAA Division II National Champion in the Indoor Distance Medley Relay (DMR). Competing across cross country, indoor track, and outdoor track, the Queen Creek, Arizona native has cemented her status as one of the premier middle-distance athletes in Division II.

### National & Conference Championships

2026 NCAA Indoor DMR National Champion: Led off the relay with a 3:25.04 split in the 1200m leg to help the ThunderWolves defend their national title and set a new Division II record time of 11:08.20.

2025 NCAA Indoor DMR National Champion: Ran the opening leg to secure CSU Pueblo's historic first-place finish at the national championship meet.

All-American Honors: Named a First-Team All-American for her championship relay performances.

RMAC Outdoor Championships (2025): Earned a runner-up 2nd-place finish in the 1500m with a time of 4:25.41, advancing to place 14th at the NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championships.

### Cross Country Milestones

NCAA Championships Qualifier: Represented the ThunderWolves at multiple NCAA Division II Cross Country Championships, finishing 72nd individually in 2024.

RMAC Championship Top Finishes: Placed 22nd individually at the 2025 RMAC XC Championships (21:47.58) and logged a 6K course personal best of 20:54.4 at the 2024 conference championship.



Brianne Kirkland, Jady Herra and Miles Gorham —Photo courtesy of CSU Pueblo Athletics Media Relations Office



Paisley Blasing, Evan Smith, Zack Rakowsky and Miles Gorham —Photo courtesy of CSU Pueblo Athletics Media Relations Office



Jady Herra — Photo courtesy of the CSU Pueblo Athletics Media Relations Office

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## Jadyn Herron (Track & Field—Cont'd)

### Academic and Individual Accolades

Jessie Award Recipient (2026): Honored with the school's outstanding senior academic award at the annual Wolfies athletic ceremony.  
First-Team Academic All-RMAC: Repeatedly selected to the conference's premier academic squad, maintaining a perfect 4.00 GPA as a Social Work major.

### Zach Rakowsky

Zack Rakowsky is a dynamic wide receiver and elite return specialist for Colorado State University Pueblo, recognized as a two-time NCAA Division II Academic All-American and a premier versatile playmaker in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference (RMAC). Over his standout career, he finished his career second on the school's all-time receptions list (161), fourth in career receiving yards (2,134), tied for eighth in career touchdown receptions (13) ... One of four receivers in school history with 2,000 or more receiving yards ... Returned 33 career punts for 270 yards and averaged 8.2 yards per punt return ... Tallied 17 career games with four or more receptions, including three double-digit reception games and five career games with 100 or more receiving yards.



Zach Radowsky —Photo courtesy of CSU Pueblo Athletics Media Relations Office

### Athletic Achievements & Honors

First-Team All-RMAC (2024): Selected to the conference's first team as a punt returner. He returned 27 punts for 236 yards, ranking 5th in the league with an 8.7-yard average.

Honorable Mention All-RMAC (2023): Earned conference accolades after emerging as the ThunderWolves' leading target, catching a team-high 58 passes for 769 yards and 6 touchdowns.

James "Spank" Blasing Award (2026): Received this prestigious honor at the CSU Pueblo Athletics Wolfies ceremony for showcasing exceptional leadership on and off the field.

Trick-Play Passing Versatility: Proved dangerous via the air, completing touchdown passes in back-to-back seasons, including a 25-yard touchdown strike at Fort Lewis in 2024.

### Academic Excellence

CSC Second-Team Academic All-American (2023, 2025): Voted a national College Sports Communicators Academic All-American twice.

First-Team Academic All-RMAC: Maintained an elite cumulative GPA as a Health Sciences major, landing a spot on the NFFCC Academic All-Colorado First Team and was a finalist for the Colorado Scholar-Athlete of the Year.

### Evan Smith

Evan Smith is a highly celebrated student-athlete for the Colorado State University Pueblo Men's Golf program. A Pueblo native, Smith has built a legacy defined by elite academic perfection, campus leadership, and steady athletic contributions, culminating in him winning the university's highest undergraduate academic honor in 2026.

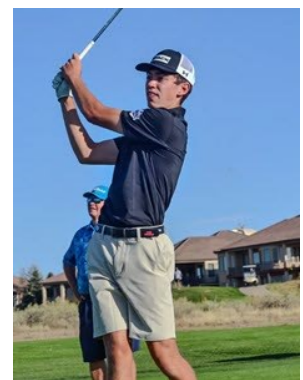
### Academic & University Distinctions

2026 Threlkeld Prize for Excellence Winner: Named the recipient of CSU Pueblo's most prestigious academic award, which recognizes the top graduating senior. As the winner, he will deliver the student address and receive the very first diploma at the Spring Commencement ceremony.

Perfect 4.00 Cumulative GPA: Maintained a flawless GPA across seven consecutive semesters, graduating summa cum laude with a dual Master of Business Administration and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in economics.

James "Spank" Blasing Award (2026): Honored with the athletic department's "Wolfie" award for demonstrating exemplary leadership, character, and performance on and off the course.

Two-Time First-Team Academic All-RMAC: Earned back-to-back First Team All-Academic honors from the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference (2024 and 2025), with a third consecutive honors selection locked in for his senior campaign.



Evan Smith —Photo courtesy of CSU Pueblo Athletics Media Relations Office

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## Evan Smith (Men's Golf—Cont'd)

### Career Athletic Accomplishments

Four-Year Postseason Contributor: Served as an integral member of the ThunderWolves roster, helping guide CSU Pueblo to NCAA regional and RMAC postseason appearances in all four years of his collegiate career.

Career-Low Round (74): Cards a collegiate career-best round of 2-over 74.

Sam Proal Invitational Highlights: Consistently posted strong performances at his hometown course (Pueblo Country Club), including a season-low round of 76 to help the nationally ranked No. 13 Pack secure a runner-up team finish in 2026.

Pueblo East High School Legacy: Prior to joining the Pack on a golf scholarship, he was a four-year letterman, a 3-time All-Conference selection, and earned Second-Team All-State honors in 2021

## GPSA's Pat Laughlin Inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame

Pat Laughlin Inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame (NWHOF) in Stillwater, OK. Coach Pat Laughlin former Pueblo East High School Head Wrestling Coach, was inducted into the NWHOF- Colorado Chapter on May 9, 2026, and received a plaque for his "Lifetime Service to Wrestling."

Laughlin was recognized for his numerous accolades over his career. As head coach, he led the Eagles to three 4A State Wrestling

Championships 2019, 2022, and 2023. Pat was also inducted into the Greater Pueblo Sports Association in 2019, and has been a GPSA member for the past six years.

Pat joins four other Puebloans who have been inducted into the NWHOF in Stillwater.

Hoy Frakes, GPSA Inductee 1981, NWHOF Inductee 2010.

Larry Wagner, GPSA Inductee 2000, NWHOF Inductee 2013.

Art Martinez, GPSA Inductee 1989, NWHOF Inductee 2014.

Jerry Sisneros, GPSA Inductee 2003, NWHOF Inductee 2015.

Pat Laughlin, GPSA Inductee 2019, NWHOF Inductee 2026.

Pat's brother Cliff Laughlin, a GPSA inductee in 2022, is also a NWHOF Inductee.

Cliff was inducted by the NWHOF - Idaho Chapter in 2003.



Pat Laughlin is presented the Lifetime Service to Wrestling Award by

## GPSA Selects Three Greatest Moments for 2026 Banquet

The Greater Pueblo Sports Association (GPSA) at its May 18 meeting selected its "Three Greatest Moments" in Pueblo Sports History for its 2026 banquet set for Nov. 18. A more comprehensive writeup of each "Greatest Moment" Era will be featured in the August Newsletter.

**Era I:** Eddie Lewis, three-time state champion in swimming for Pueblo Central (1977-78) - Coach Dave Knapp (1977); Keith Townsend (1978)

**Era II:** John Banker, five-time state swimming champion in the 100-yd . Butterfly for Pueblo Centennial (2003-07) - Coach Bob Haley

**Era III:** Pueblo East Wrestler Andy Garcia ends high school career winning four individual state titles at 285 lb. weight class four consecutive years (2003-07). First wrestler in Colorado history to win four titles at 285 lb. weight class . Coach Pat Laughlin

## Calendar Reminders

### Mon., June 1, 2026 (Brian Macartney Award Deadline):

Applications due for outstanding male and female high school senior athletes from each school in Pueblo Districts #60 and #70. Click [HERE](#) to view the Brian Macartney Application.

### Sat., Aug. 1, 2026 (New GPSA Inductees Deadline):

Induction applications forms are due for nominating prominent athletes, sports teams and recreational activities in Pueblo County. Click [HERE](#) to view the Greater Pueblo Sports Association Application.

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