

# NSU sprinters talk tough, back it up

## Spartans' 4x100 men's team breezes at Norfolk Relays.

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**NORFOLK** — If confidence won races, the Norfolk State 4x100 relay team would be shattering world records every time out.

"A breeze," anchorman Christopher Duncan said shortly after the Spartans' resounding Norfolk Relays victory Saturday. "We need more competition."

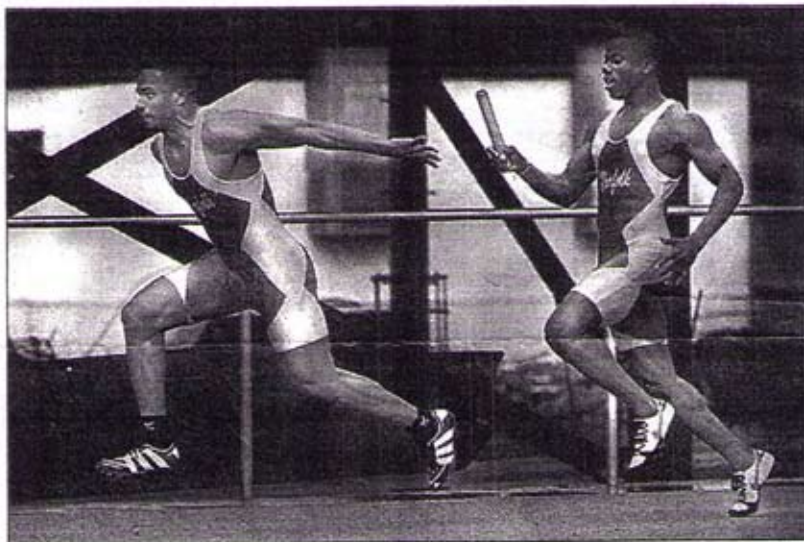
They found little Saturday. Ignoring the persistent drizzle at Norfolk State's as-yet untitled — and unfinished — football stadium, juniors Malcolm Watts, Joel Mascoll, Christian Williams and Duncan led wire-to-wire and whipped the second-place entry in the five-team field by 15 meters even though Duncan slowed down near the end of his leg.

"Like a jog in the park," he said.

It wasn't supposed to be this easy. Former Norfolk State star Tim Montgomery, a U.S. Olympian last year, and Virginia Beach's Andre Cason, a world-record-setting sprinter, were also scheduled to do some relay running.

"On the college level, my guys can run with just about anyone in the country," Norfolk State coach Steve Riddick said. "But with (Montgomery and Cason) in there, they'd be hard-pressed to win."

Shortly after his morning workout, Montgomery withdrew, citing



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**Norfolk State's Joel Mascoll reaches back for the baton from Malcolm Watts during Saturday's 4x100 relay. The Spartans were easy winners.**

the wet track. A few hours later, Cason also pulled out.

Meet director Riddick supported both decisions.

"You don't put water in a Ferrari," Riddick said.

The third member of the meet's Terrific Trio, 1996 Olympic medal-winner Chandra Sturrup, did perform and contributed a blistering leg to a winning relay team.

But the absence of the two male stars stripped the field of its only legitimate challengers to the NSU runners, and the brash Spartans knew it.

"This wasn't a surprise," lead runner Malcolm Watts said. "We basically used this as a tuneup."

For this week's CIAA championships?

"No, that's no competition, ei-

ther," said Watts, noting that the Spartans relay team had dominated the field in the CIAA indoor meet. "We're getting ready for the Penn Relays."

Last year's Penn Relays served as a coming-out party of sorts for the Spartans, who stunned a national television audience by whipping defending NCAA champion Texas Christian to win the 4x100. Norfolk State also took the men's 4x200, and Montgomery prevailed in the 100-meter dash.

Three-fourths of last year's championship 4x100 team — Montgomery, Brian Lewis and Ramon Clay — have since turned pro, but Riddick appears to have retooled.

"He knows talent when he sees it," Duncan said.