



Alan Webb leaves longtime coach to join Alberto Salazar in Oregon

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By Dick Patrick, USA TODAY

After two consecutive disappointing seasons, [Alan Webb](#) has decided to split with long-time coach Scott Raczko and leave his hometown of Reston, Va., to be coached by [Alberto Salazar](#) in Portland, Ore.

Raczko has coached Webb for 10 years, guiding him to the U.S. prep record in the mile (3:53.43) in 2001 and to the U.S. record (3:46.91) in 2007, plus three national 1,500-meter titles.

Since the successes of 2007, Webb has struggled. He overtrained in 2008 and failed to make the Olympic team. Hamstring and Achilles tendon injuries undermined this season. Webb withdrew from the 1,500 final at the U.S. championships, forfeiting an opportunity to qualify for the world championships.

Salazar, reached by phone in Switzerland where he's supervising altitude training for some of his runners prior to the Aug.15-23 world championships in Berlin, said Webb visited Portland a few months ago and liked the facilities.

"Two weeks ago Alan called asking me to become his coach," Salazar said. "To be honest I was completely surprised by it."

Raczko has coached Webb since his sophomore year at South Lakes High School with the exception of the 2001-02 academic year when Webb was a freshman at the University of Michigan.

"It's an amicable decision between (Alan) and Scott," said Ray Flynn, Webb's agent. "He likes the resources and the infrastructure of the Oregon project.

"Scott has coached him to the highest level of any American miler ever. Alan was to be respectful of what Scott has done for him. But he's reached a stage in his career now at 26 years old that he feels needs to make a change. The Oregon project is presenting itself as the best option for him where he feels he can make...positive changes in his career. Sometimes we all need a change."

Raczko and Webb did not respond to calls for comment.

Portland is becoming the distance capital of U.S. running. Salazar and Jerry Schumacher coach separate groups of Nike-sponsored runners in the city, including U.S. and NCAA 10,000 champion [Galen Rupp](#), U.S. 5,000 champ [Matt Tegenkamp](#), multi-U.S. recordholder [Shalane Flanagan](#), top marathoner [Kara Goucher](#) and U.S. 10,000 champ Amy Begley.

For all his success with runners from 5,000 through the marathon, Salazar hasn't coached a top 1,500 runner. "I'm confident we have the resources here and I can acquire the knowledge necessary," said Salazar, a former Boston and New York marathon winner.

The plan is for Webb to visit Nike headquarters this weekend and undergo biomechanical evaluation. Then he'll head for Palo Alto, Calif., to visit noted podiatrist Amol Saxena, who will treat his Achilles problem with shock wave therapy. He's expected to relocate to Portland in September or November.

Salazar wants Webb, who has a muscular upper body, to lose some of his bulk: "He won't touch a weight the first six months. He has to lean out."

Webb has attained all of his success while residing in Reston, Va., a Washington, D.C., suburb. After high school, he went to Michigan for a year before deciding to return home and turn pro.

"With any change there's risk," Flynn said. "For whatever reason, things weren't working."