

# Nuguse has pet tortoise, Olympic bronze medal

By Pat Graham  
Associated Press

A middle-distance runner nicknamed “The Goose” has a pet tortoise named Tyro who hangs out in a terrarium. That seems almost like a whimsical scene from the pages of a Dr. Seuss book.

Yared Nuguse embraces the irony of having his reptilian friend, who serves as a reminder to take each step slow and steady, no matter how fast things speeds up.

These days, Nuguse has found the ideal tempo between track and not track.

On the running front, he's speedier than ever, setting the world indoor mile record over the winter — it was broken five days later — and winning a bronze medal in the 1,500 meters at the Paris Olympics last summer.

He's at peace in his personal life, too, and publicly came out as gay in a social media post in March. It was an important step in “just being completely comfortable with myself and anything I want to do,” he said.

“I've found this balance where everything's just generally feeling pretty good and going pretty well,” added Nuguse, who races in the 800 and 1,500 meters at Grand Slam Track's next stop in Philadelphia this weekend. “If I take a step back and just really remember what you're doing is running for fun, it makes it feel a lot less stressful.”

## NUGUSE, AN ASPIRING ORTHODONTIST

Teeth, not track, have long been part of his career path, with Nuguse's goal to one day become an orthodontist. It's just that his success in racing caused a detour from dental school.

It was only through word of mouth that he even wound up in the track sphere. He grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, where his high school gym teacher spotted his running potential and recommended him to the track coach. Nuguse ran his first-ever mile in roughly 5 minutes, 30 seconds.

His senior year he won the 800-, 1,600- and 3,200-meter races at the Kentucky Class AAA track championships. Nuguse attended Notre Dame, where he majored in biochemistry, planning for dental school, as he excelled in cross country and track. In 2019, he captured



MATTHIAS SCHRADER | AP FILE

**BRONZE:** Bronze medalist Yared Nuguse, of the United States, poses on the podium after the men's 1500-meter final at the 2024 Summer Olympics on Aug. 6, 2024, in Saint-Denis, France.

the 1,500 at the NCAA championships.

Two years later, he finished runner-up to Cole Hocker at the same meet. Nuguse also qualified that season for the U.S. Olympic trials, where he took third and earned a spot to the Tokyo Games.

He put dentistry aspirations on the back burner when he made Team USA.

“I'm like, ‘Maybe this is something I can continue doing?’” said Nuguse, who didn't race in Tokyo because of a quad injury. “I figured running can't wait, but dental school can.”

## BRONZE MEDAL IN PARIS

Last summer at the Paris Games, Nuguse was in the medal mix in the 1,500 heading into the home stretch. The race was billed as a showdown between British runner Josh Kerr and Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen. But Hocker and Nuguse crashed the party, with Hocker surging past Kerr for the win and Nuguse closing fast to beat out Ingebrigtsen for the bronze.

It was part of a memorable showing by the American distance core, with Grant Fisher capturing bronze in the 5,000 and 10,000. Kenneth Rooks also took silver in the 3,000-meter steeplechase.

“A lot of us aren't afraid to tangle it up with people

who have been considered the best at these longer distance events,” Nuguse said. “That's what makes track so much fun — having new things happen.”

## WORLD INDOOR MILE RECORD

Nuguse, who earned “The Goose” nickname as a play on his last name, trains under coach Dathan Ritzenhein in Boulder, Colorado. He is participating in Grand Slam Track's new league, building toward U.S. championships later this summer and, should things go well, world championships in Tokyo in September.

His speed was certainly on display three months ago at the Millrose Games in New York, where Nuguse broke the world indoor mark for the mile by finishing in 3:46.63. He eclipsed the record of 3:47.01 set by Yomif Kejelcha of Ethiopia in March 2019.

“It just felt really good, honestly,” said Nuguse, who celebrated with a night of karaoke, including his favorite Taylor Swift tune, “You Belong With Me.”

His world record lasted five days; Ingebrigtsen broke it by 1.49 seconds at a race in France.

“I don't think it's the last time we'll see the world record broken,” said Nuguse, who is sponsored by the shoe and apparel company On.

## NUGUSE'S ANNOUNCEMENT

In late March, Nuguse introduced the world to his boyfriend by sharing a series of photos on Instagram.

“That post was more important for myself than it was for telling people,” the 25-year-old said. “I'm OK with everyone knowing now. I can be more at peace because I'm continuing to accept myself and every funny little part of me.”

## TYRO THE TORTOISE

Nuguse's pet tortoise's full name is Tyrosine, which is an amino acid. Most of the time Tyro just chills in his terrarium.

“He's a great little guy,” said Nuguse, who's had him for nearly four years.

Nuguse appreciates the contrast.

“Fast man, slow animal,” Nuguse cracked. “I like the idea he absorbs my slow energy. Although, he's very fast himself — when he's motivated.”

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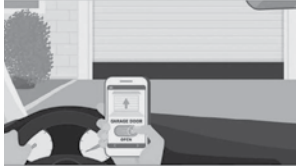
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