

2015 SEASON OUTLOOK



Few teams enter the 2015 NCAA Cross Country season with the high expectations that the University of Colorado does, but that is what happens when a single team has been so successful for the last few years.

The men are coming off back-to-back NCAA Championships (2013 and '14), and have won the last four Pac-12 Conference titles. Expectations are high, but luckily for the Buffaloes, head coach **Mark Wetmore** (21st year) knows how to handle it and doesn't let those expectations take over.

"I have my expectations, and I allow the team to have its expectations, then I don't worry too much about anybody else's expectations," he said in early August. "We get it, that we are the defending national champions; we get it, that we have a good roster. When the rankings come out, we'll be number one. What's disconcerting about that is if you finish second in the NCAA, you lost. But, this is a good group. On the men's side, they have experience; they're more mature; they've been there before; they're less likely to make dumb mistakes when we get to the big race. We feel good about it. What we have to manage is any sense of entitlement among them, or that they get cavalier about it, or that they get arrogant. I don't see any evidence of that yet. That's what we'll be watching for mostly."

The men return seven letterwinners to this team, which includes five All-Americans. Four of those are seniors, **Ammar Moussa**, **Pierce Murphy**, **Morgan Pearson** and **Connor Winter**; and **Ben Saarel** is a junior. Murphy and Saarel are two-time All-Americans, while Moussa, Pearson and Winter have earned the distinction once. Redshirt sophomores **Zach Perrin** (2013) and **Adam Peterman** (2014) were also members of a national championship team in the last two seasons.

Four from that group scored at the 2014 NCAA Championships, Moussa, Murphy, Saarel and Winter, while Pearson scored on the 2013 team with Moussa, Murphy and Saarel.

"It is not atypical to have four or more varsity-experienced returning athletes, but it is atypical to have four or five that are that good," Wetmore said. "We have four returning people from last year's team that were All-Americans. That's a pretty good place to start when you score five."

CU has a wealth of young talent waiting for a chance to race for the Buffs. Freshmen **Ryan Forsyth**, **Ethan Gonzales**, **Chris Herrick** and **Paul Miller** all redshirted the 2014 season and could be looking for a roster spot, along with incoming freshmen **John Dressel** and **Joe Klecker**. Forsyth, Miller and Dressel all placed in the top 10 of the 2015 USA Junior Cross Country Championships last February and Miller and Dressel went on to compete at the IAAF World Championships in March.

"There are two [freshmen] guys that could potentially help us, John Dressel and Joe Klecker," Wetmore said. "They're nationally ranked and very accomplished, but a 17 and a half or 18-year-old guy trying to make this team is a long-shot. As it's been mentioned, we have four returning very good men. We have our guy back from a year before who didn't run for us last year; he's very good. Our top five is probably solid, if no one gets hurt. We have returning, experienced juniors. That's seven and we run ten at the conference meet, so one or two of those freshmen might get a spot."

The CU women's team shouldn't be counted out for postseason success. The team returns five letterwinners from a seventh place finish at NAAs and a third place finish at Pac-12s. Junior **Erin Clark** is the only All-American on the squad, but she will be joined by a talented group. Senior **Maddie Alm** narrowly missed All-American honors by five

spots in 2014. The team is very young, but that youth has a great deal of experience. Sophomore **Kaitlyn Benner** and redshirt freshman **Valerie Constien** finished 1-2 at the USA Junior Cross Country Championships, advancing to the world championships.

"We have a good women's team, better than a year ago when they got seventh [at NAAs]," Wetmore said. "We return one of the top runners from two years ago who was out last year. This will be a team that can definitely challenge for the podium. Combined with the men and the women, they might be the best two teams we've had here, so I'm really excited about that."

Other returning women looking to make an impact for the Buffs include sophomores **Eryn Blakely** and **Lucy May** and junior **Annie Kelly**. The Buffs also return junior **Carrie Verdon** and sophomore **Melanie Nun** to the line-up after both suffered injuries last season and redshirted. Like the men, the women have some freshmen who could be challenging for a spot on the varsity roster.

"There are two women that can impact our varsity this fall; it's a little easier for women than men," Wetmore explained. "We have a woman coming from Arizona, named Dani Jones, and one from Pennsylvania, named Brianna Schwartz, who were among the best in the whole country in the middle and long-distance running. Whether they will be good enough to make our team better enough that we would take their redshirt off them will be the question. They could make the sixth or seventh or eighth or ninth spot for us and compete in the Pac-12 or maybe even the NCAA, still doesn't mean we would use them. If they can't change our score in the top five, then it'd be better to save them. Those two freshmen women are very good."

The season officially kicks off on Friday, Sept. 4, at the Colorado State Invitational. CU will host its annual Rocky Mountain Shootout on Oct. 3, which will be its only home meet of the season.

Washington State is the host for the Pac-12 Championships this year on October 30 in Colfax, Wash. Colorado's men have won all four team titles since joining the league in 2011. The women won the championship in 2011 and have placed fifth (2012), second (2013) and third (2014). Both teams are poised well to contend for another team title this season.

Winning the Pac-12 Championships won't be an easy task as several of the league's schools are ranked in the USTFCCA Top-30 Preseason Poll. After CU on the men's side, Stanford is ranked second and Oregon is sixth. UCLA (13), Washington (20), Arizona State (22) and California (t28) are also listed in the poll. On the women's side, Oregon is ranked sixth and Stanford is seventh. Washington came in at 15th.

The NCAA Mountain Region Championships are set for Nov. 13 in Albuquerque, N.M. and Louisville, Ky. will host the NCAA Cross Country Championships on November 21 on the course inside E.P. Tom Sawyer State Park.

"I think I said this a year ago and I think I said it a year before, every year is different; the opponents are different; the team members are different; even each individual teammate is different from what he or she was a year ago," Wetmore explained. "The science of the sport evolves. [Associate head] Coach (**Heather**) Burroughs and I try to keep abreast of that and keep learning. Really, every year is a new story; I don't know if it's a new book or a new chapter. That's what keeps it fresh and keeps it exciting. It can get waring, but the enthusiasm stays the same and the challenges stay the same. This is a special team coming up, it's going to be fun."



2015 ROSTERS

COLORADO WOMEN

Name	Ht	Yr	Exp.	Hometown (High School/College)
Madeline Alm*	5-3	Sr.	2L	Louisville, Colo. (Monarch)
Kaitlyn Benner*	5-6	So.	1L	Superior, Colo. (Monarch)
Eryn Blakely	5-3	So.	1L	Monrovia, Calif. (Alverno)
Mackenzie Caldwell	5-3	So.	1L	Columbus, Ind. (Columbus North)
Erin Clark*	5-5	Jr.	2L	Eugene, Ore. (South Eugene)
Valerie Constien	5-6	RFr.	RS	Edwards, Colo. (Battle Mountain)
Dani Jones	5-5	Fr.	HS	Phoenix, Ariz. (Desert Vista)
Annie Kelly*	5-6	Jr.	1L	Alpharetta, Ga. (Milton/Mississippi)
Kaleigh Kroeker	5-2	Fr.	HS	Colorado Springs, Colo. (Pine Creek)
Elissa Mann	5-10	Fr.	HS	Louisville, Colo. (Monarch)
Karina Mann	5-9	Fr.	HS	Louisville, Colo. (Monarch)
Lucy May	5-4	So.	1L	St. Louis, Mo. (St. Joseph's Academy)
Melanie Nun	5-4	RSO.	1L/RS	Broomfield, Colo. (Legacy)
Amanda Ortiz	5-1	So.	VR	Eagle, Colo. (Battle Mountain)
Abigail Regner	5-5	Fr.	HS	Basking Ridge, N.J. (Ridge)
Brianna Schwartz	5-8	Fr.	HS	Pittsburgh, Pa. (Shaler Area)
Cayla Seligman	5-2	Fr.	HS	Issaquah, Wash. (Issaquah)
Tayler Tuttle	5-3	So.	TR	Snellville, Ga. (Providence Christian/Georgia)
Carrie Verdon	5-2	RJr.	2L/RS	Moraga, Calif. (Campolindo)

COLORADO MEN

Name	Ht.	Yr	Exp.	Hometown (High School/College)
John Dressel	6-0	Fr.	HS	Colbert, Wash. (Mt. Spokane)
Ryan Forsyth	5-11	RFr.	RS	Severna Park, Md. (Severna Park)
Reilly Friedman	5-11	Fr.	HS	Atlanta, Ga. (The Galloway School)
Ethan Gonzales	5-11	RFr.	RS	Westminster, Colo. (Broomfield)
Nick Harris	5-10	Jr.	TR	Niwot, Colo. (Niwot/Washington)
Chris Herrick	6-1	RFr.	RS	Missoula, Mont. (Hellgate)
Joe Holvey	5-6	Jr.	VR	Eugene, Ore. (South Eugene/Oregon)
Joe Klecker	6-0	Fr.	HS	Minnetonka, Minn. (Hopkins)
Christian Martin	5-9	So.	TR	Littleton, Colo. (Heritage/Nebraska)
Paul Miller	6-2	RFr.	RS	Fort Collins, Colo. (Poudre)
Ammar Moussa*	5-7	Sr.	3L	Arcadia, Calif. (Arcadia)
Pierce Murphy*	5-8	Sr.	3L	Hanalei, Hawai'i (Island)
Morgan Pearson	5-11	RSr.	2L	Morristown, N.J. (Delbarton/Duke)
Zachary Perrin	6-0	RSO.	1L/RS	Lakeside, Mont. (Flathead)
Adam Peterman	6-2	So.	1L	Missoula, Mont. (Hellgate)
Justice Ramos	6-2	Fr.	HS	Dolores, Colo. (Montezuma-Cortez)
Ben Saarel*	6-1	Jr.	2L	Park City, Utah (Park City)
Luke Sheesley	6-0	So.	TR	Fort Collins, Colo. (Fort Collins)
Connor Winter*	5-11	Sr.	3L	Centennial, Colo. (Arapahoe)

*-indicates returning 2014 postseason scorers