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Wednesday, 21 April 2010**Enters sophomore year on fire**

Former Crested Butte Titans track and cross-country star Emma Coburn continues her rise to collegiate prominence in the 3,000-meter steeplechase as a member of the University of Colorado (CU) track and field team, one of the top Division I programs in the nation. Competing in her first outdoor race of the 2010 season, the Mt. SAC Relays on Thursday, April 15, Coburn recorded the fastest time in the world for the 2010 season with a time of 9 minutes, 56.29 seconds. She was subsequently named the Big 12 athlete of the week and is ranked number one in the nation and world.

Coburn's list of high school track and cross-country accomplishments is staggering garnering numerous state titles in a variety of disciplines while running for the Crested Butte Titans track team.

With several high school distance titles to her name, Coburn took a chance at the Southwest Track Classic in New Mexico race her junior year and entered the 2,000-meter steeplechase. She won and thus qualified for the Nike Outdoor Nationals later that year where she took fourth place.

She returned to the Nike Outdoor nationals as a senior to finish in second place, was named an all-American and punched her ticket to a full ride scholarship to run track and field at CU. Coburn faced her next big hurdle as a freshman at CU. Athletes make a huge jump in the steeplechase from the high school level to collegiate competition as the course is extended from 2,000 meters to 3,000 meters.

Nevertheless, the efforts of Coburn and the CU coaching staff in the fall and winter of her freshman year had her more than ready when she lined up for her first season of collegiate track and field that spring.

She proceeded to shave significant time off her steeplechase effort with each competition throughout the season and in May of her freshman year, Coburn set a new Junior American record in the 3,000-meter steeplechase with a time of 10:06.54.

Coburn closed out her freshman year qualifying for the NCAA Championships. She ran a new personal best time of 10:06.02 in the preliminary heat to reach the finals but succumbed to some pressure in the finals and closed with an 11th place finish.

"I kind of crumbled a little bit," says Coburn. "I was disappointed but I was happy with running a personal best."

"We were very pleased with her freshman year," adds CU track and field head coach Mark Wetmore. "Steeplechase has some technical aspects to it and what's special about her is her immediate competence at the technical aspects."

It now appears she's picking up right where she left off running the fastest time in 2010 last week in her first race.

"We both expected her to be close to 10 minutes," says Wetmore. "9:56 was a pleasant surprise. It's an excellent start."

Coburn chalked it up to a newly found "kick" that she discovered at a couple races during the indoor track season this past winter. A kick helps distance runners finish the race strong and can make the difference between winning and second place.

"In the indoor season at the conference meet I had a really good kick and I've been focusing on it since then," explains Coburn.

At the Mt. SAC event, Coburn started off in fourth place pulling herself into second place by the final lap. It was then that she gave her new "kick" another try.

"I didn't want to go out right away and blow up," says Coburn. "But I never ended up feeling crappy so with 300 meters left I decided to kick."

Coburn closed the gap on the leader in the final stretch and passed her for the win.

"I have a little more speed in me now to kick someone down," says Coburn. "I think I got it and now I can use it."

Both Wetmore and Coburn expect her to make a return to the NCAA Championships this season with a stronger finish in mind.

"We have very high hopes for her being on the podium," says Wetmore.

Weather

Today: Decreasing
Clouds
Hi 47°F
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"A goal for me is being an all-American (top eight)," says Coburn. Looking ahead to London 2012, Wetmore believes Coburn has a legitimate shot at the U.S. team.

"She absolutely has the potential to be an Olympian," says Wetmore. "It takes a time of 9:30, 9:35 to make the U.S. team but by 2012 that's a perfectly reasonable possibility."

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