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Bill Husted's Bar & Grilled

Bloom is a bachelor but not the "Bachelor"

By Bill Husted
The Denver Post

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Olympian and NFL footballer Jeremy Bloom on August 11, 2009 at the Oak Tavern in downtown Denver. (Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post)

BAR:

OAK TAVERN

Oak Tavern is club-titan Francois Safieddine's latest entry into LoDo nightlife. He took the old Monarck nightclub, 1416 Market St., and transformed it into the swankiest sports bar in town. Oak Tavern is what Old Chicago would look like if Ralph Lauren owned it. Two deer heads greet you on the left wall as you enter. Two bars boast 10 stools each, seven booths line the right side of the room under a vintage Western photo. A back room is painted as the American flag with lounge-y couches facing two of the bar's seven flat screens. It's one of the best-looking bars in town, even during a ballgame.

GRILLED:

JEREMY BLOOM

Jeremy Bloom, 27, is Colorado's homegrown hero. Born and raised in Loveland, he was a high school football and track star before he went on to become a CU-Boulder football star, three-time World Cup Champion freestyle skier, two-time Olympian, a black-belt in tae kwon do and an NFL player (although injuries kept him benched). His boyish Colorado looks made him an Abercrombie & Fitch model. He lives in downtown Denver but travels to promote his foundation, Wish of a Lifetime, a charity that grants wishes to seniors. He's also involved in a booming website, MDinfo.com, that gives out free medical advice from health

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pros. He orders a Coors Light.



Artwork at the Oak Tavern in downtown Denver. (Cyrus McCrimmon | The Denver Post)

Bloom: I enjoy a team sport much better when you win. But there is more room for politics. In a solo sport, if I got it done, it's done.



Decor at the Oak Tavern in downtown Denver. (Cyrus McCrimmon | The Denver Post)

BH: That's your drink?

Bloom: I don't drink much, but if I have a beer I'll have a Coors Light. Mostly I drink water.

BH: Food?

Bloom: I eat extremely healthy. Dinner is usually broiled chicken and raw vegetables.

BH: So what's similar about skiing and football?

Bloom: Mentally they are very similar, the way you prepare for competition. But physically you could not pick two more different sports.

BH: Do you prefer a team sport to a solo sport?

It's reflected in my score. I like having all the pressure on me.

BH: Did you get distracted by the cheerleaders when you played for the Philadelphia Eagles?

Bloom: I was in a serious relationship then, but I'm not going to tell you I wasn't looking.

BH: Are you dating someone?

Bloom: I just got out of a four-year relationship, so no.

BH: Would you ever go on "The Bachelor."

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Bloom: I've been asked, but no.

BH: Why wouldn't you?

Bloom: I'm on "The Bachelor" already. And asking a girl to marry me on national television just isn't what I'm about.

BH: Do women throw themselves at you?

Bloom: How am I supposed



The Oak Tavern in downtown Denver.
(Cyrus McCrimmon | The Denver Post)

to answer a question like that? Let's just say I like a challenge.

BH: Who's your perfect girl?

Bloom: I grew up with a nurturing mother, an insanely good mother, so nurturing is important to me.

BH: You're an Abercrombie & Fitch model, a skiing champion, a football player, a black belt, with a foundation. You're Batman. What's wrong with you?

Bloom: Oh, there is plenty wrong with me. Sometimes I get overly passionate about what I'm doing and push people away.

BH: How do you keep in shape?

Bloom: A lot of cross-training. Living in Colorado, I can hike, bike, water ski, swim, run. The more I'm outside the better. And then some heavy lifting.

BH: You were a punt returner. Isn't that



(Photos by Cyrus McCrimmon | The Denver Post)

the scariest position on the field?

Bloom: Waiting for the ball, you feel like

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everyone is coming down on you. I just loved it. I loved the fear.

BH: What's your idea of happiness?

Bloom: To always be chasing a goal, having great friends and eventually having a family.

BH: What's with the Wish of a Lifetime Foundation? Why do you want to be so involved with seniors?

Bloom: Both of my grandparents have been very influential in my life. My grandfather taught me how to ski by throwing miniature candy bars down the hill when I was 3 years old. And I went to Asia with the U.S. Ski Team and saw how they treated their elders. And I wanted to one day start a foundation that had the same ideals.

BH: What are some of the wishes you've granted?

Bloom: We have a sky-diving trip coming up with a 73-year-old grandmother.

BH: Seniors' wishes are different from what kids wish for.

Bloom: Sure. It's so normal to go through life with changing wishes and dreams. And most of the seniors we've come in contact with, low-income seniors who have, say, sent their kids to college, when you want to grant them a wish they are totally out of their element. They say "No. I'm here to help, I'm here to give."

BH: It's a foundation with a lot of joy.

Bloom: The reason for that is my whole life in athletics has been selfishly spent. All I ever cared about was winning medals or football games. I pushed things aside, friends, family, to accomplish things, to go to the Olympics and play for the NFL. Those were the dreams I have had since I was 15 years old, and in order to do that, I lived a selfish life. So now I have to take my blessings and create something, somewhere, to help others.

BH: Your heroes?

Bloom: That's easy. Pat Tillman is my hero. I wish I was more like him.

BH: What do you value in your friends?

Bloom: The biggest blessing in my life are my friends. Their generosity, their unwavering support, their loyalty.

BH: Where would you like to live?

Bloom: I will always live in Colorado.

BH: Where would you like to visit?

Bloom: The South Pacific.

BH: Restaurants?

Bloom: I went to Tag last night and it was really good. Earl's is always fun.

BH: What do you dislike?

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Bloom: Celebrities who live on a fantasy planet.

BH: Music?

Bloom: I like The Fray. But I am a huge country fan. Keith Urban, Carrie Underwood, Brooks & Dunn, George Strait.

BH: Do you listen to music while you ski?

Bloom: Oh yes. And while I'm working out.

BH: Do you have a personal style?

Bloom: T-shirt, jeans, flip-flops.

BH: Do you always wear your hat backward?

Bloom: Sometimes I wear it forward. I usually wear hats.

BH: Books?

Bloom: Not so much.

BH: Motto?

Bloom: "It's not the critic who counts."

BH: You never won an Olympic medal. Does that eat at you?

Bloom: Of course.

BH: What happened?

Bloom: I compete in a sport where the smallest

mistake is the difference between first and 10th. I felt good at both Olympics. I wasn't nervous. It just didn't happen.

BH: Are you going to the 2010 Olympics?

Bloom: I don't know. There has been a shift in priorities for me. I have a different landscape of challenges. I'm trying to find where it all fits right now.

*Interview conducted, condensed and edited by
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Packers Rookie Brad Jones is a Quick Study

Updated: Aug 26, 2009 4:27 PM MDT

Seventh-round draft pick Brad Jones looks like a quick study after missing the first couple weeks of training camp with a back injury.

Jones made an impressive interception Wednesday morning in 7-on-7.

That's after causing one of the Packers' five turnovers in their win last weekend against the Buffalo Bills following just a few practices.

"I did OK. There were some mental errors that I had in the game but I think that's to be expected. But overall I did well, I played well," Jones said.



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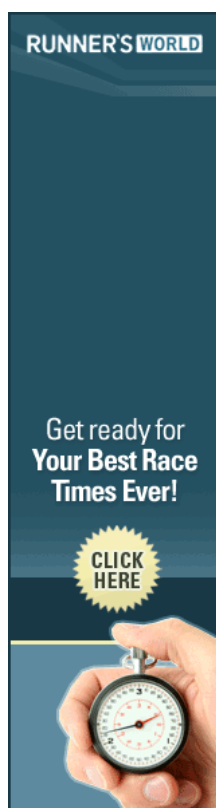
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August 28, 2009

A Brief Chat With Matt McCue

By Peter Gambaccini

Photo supplied by author

Matt McCue is the author of "An Honorable Run" (Book Surge Press, www.anhonorablerun.com), a lively and fast-moving memoir of his years as a high school runner in Iowa and as a collegiate runner in the powerhouse University of Colorado program. And it's the tale of two coaches, the very personal and involved and hands-on (he believed in hugs) Bob Brown of frequent state champion Iowa City Regina High School and the more reserved man of fewer words, the "mystical" legend Mark Wetmore of Colorado, for whom McCue struggled to achieve even the status of a "walk on." McCue's teammates included Dathan Ritzenhein and Jorge and Ed Torres. Former mile world recordholder Jim Ryun notes "this book is a celebration of the unsung heroes of sport, the coaches who sacrifice their time to form champions and change lives. Matt captures all of this." McCue has written for Dye Stat and for this runnersworld.com website, and he's worked at "Vanity Fair" and "Rolling Stone." A portion of the proceeds of "An Honorable Run" will go to the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (www.pancan.org); Bob Brown succumbed to that form of cancer.



There are two things going on in this book. You're telling the tale of this extraordinary high school Coach Brown. And you're navigating through life and dealing with Mark Wetmore, a very different kind of coach who has his own legacy. Are you casting yourself as a guy who falls under the spell of two very successful and very useful mentors who are very different from each other?

Matt McCue: Yes, very much. It's obviously to honor Coach Brown a little bit, because of what happened to him. But it's also to show that Coach Brown doesn't really change during the book, as Wetmore doesn't change. They're too unique individuals, they both love coaching runners. They have absolutely different approaches to how they do it, but there are also some similarities between the two. But they're two unique guys, and the aim is to show that I had these two

powerful mentors in my life who each played a pivotal role dealing with my passion with running, and to show how they took people under their wing, how they helped people improve, and the way they went about that. It's definitely not to say that Coach Brown is good and Wetmore is good or Coach Brown is bad. Coach Brown had success as a small-town Iowa coach and Wetmore had success as a national champion collegiate coach, and each in his element is perfectly suited and very good at what they do.

When did the genesis of this book come about? When did you decide this was something you wanted to write about?

MM: It came right as I was graduating from college in May 2005. I knew I wanted to do something in writing and I had at that point already decided to move to New York to become a journalist, author, reporter, whatever. That time was right after Coach Brown's cancer diagnosis and it was right as I was finishing my college (running) career and I think my perspective had widened over the past four years, and it all made sense at the right time - okay, here I'd just learned this big lesson over the past four years at Colorado, and I had this mentor I wanted to pay tribute to, and the passion and the work ethic I had for running I really wanted to pour into writing a book. It was really my mom, though, who said "Matt, there's a story here. I'm not sure exactly what it is, but you're the perfect person to write this story." And I just started playing around with idea. I wrote something like 200 pages of just stories I'd heard or people had told me, or things that I'd lived and experienced, and then quickly the editing process began. And that got whittled down to the final book.

The extreme competitiveness and high standards you had in Iowa - what did all of that derive from? Where do you think you got that from? Obviously, it could just be something that's intrinsically in you.

MM: I've always been a very competitive person. I think that's just the way I'm wired. My father was a football player; my mother was a cheerleader, so there was never any pressure to go out for running. But I remember from an early age that they would always get up before we went to school and my dad would go for a run and my mother would go for a walk. They always instilled in me the idea that "you've got to get up early and get out the door and put in some work." I always wanted to be excellent in athletics. For a while, I was good at basketball. But when I no longer was growing, I fell into running a little bit. Running, thankfully, is one of the few sports where lack of talent can hold you back a little bit but you can also excel if you don't have talent. And I quickly learned that and I loved the hard work and how hard work brought success.

Running's different from a team sport in which despite your skills, a coach may decide you don't fit into what he wants. If you outrun everyone in a race, there's no debate about your value. We know what your value is.

MM: The same thing with training a little bit. If I'm a senior in high school and I run 70 miles a week over the summer, I don't really need a coach to tell me how to run 70 miles. I can go out there and do a few hard days, a few easy days, and one long run, and I'll be in really good shape coming into a season. I think what I overlooked is just a coach's willingness and desire to be out there every day with you. I had no problem going out and motivating myself in the off-season. If it's cold in Iowa, I will still go out and get my run in. We had morning practice at Regina in Iowa City. Coach Brown was always there. Everyone stumbles in, it's early, it's cold, and our coach is there waiting for us at the track. The same with Wetmore, too. We'd go run long and hard on Sundays - some guys doing 20-miles my junior and senior year - and at the end of the run, there would be only three or four guys there, but Wetmore would be there and he'd say a few words. He wouldn't say a WHOLE lot, but just the fact that he was there was really important, I think.

Can you describe briefly the incident in Iowa when you tossed away the team's silver medals and what prompted you to do that and what you thought of Coach Brown's response to that?

MM: I was so set on winning, so single-minded. I don't know if I'd read something or heard something, but after that day (at a state district meet) after we finished in second place - and it probably stemmed more from my seventh place finish, because I was so mad at my own performance and that carried over and when the team didn't win, it was like a double whammy there - I thought, for some reason, and this is the mindset of a sort of maturing 18-year-old, that if I could take these medals and pump up these guys and throw them away and cast away our disappointment, that would really bond everyone together. It would be like one of those turning point moments in a season which just organically happen and the guys would get behind me and say "we can definitely win next week at the state meet, and we're disappointed, too." That's what I imagined happening in my mind if I threw away my disappointment; we would go on to better things.

And that is not what happened at all. Looking back, it should not have come as any surprise to me. But at the time, I felt, in a sense, let down that my teammates aren't following me and here I am and I did this thing. I had no regret about it. Later that day, Coach Brown, of course, found out about it. (Pauses) I was disappointed. I thought Coach Brown wasn't going to let me run at the state meet the next week. Fortunately, he did. Coach Brown said he'd only been mad at an athlete four times over the course of his 20-some year career, and I was one of them. And the way he disciplined me was with a five-minute talk, and it was very direct, and kind of in my face in a way. But after that, it was done. We never talked about it again. We went back to Iowa City, I got off the bus, he shook my hand and said "we're moving on from this." It certainly wasn't my finest hour, but I learned from it a lot.

Brown sounds like a really accessible nothing-to-hide, nothing-held-back kind of guy. Was his success as a coach mostly attributable to the fact that he has a form of running genius, or that he's the kind of guy people want to do well for because they love him so much?

MM: I think they really responded to him. Coach Brown had a good training program. It worked in small-town Iowa. I think he got people to over-perform because he cared about them, because of the way he would catch them in the halls. I just talked to (Coach) Joe Newton at York High School (in Elmhurst, Illinois) and he had a great quote. He said "if high

school runners are busting their ass, they really want to make sure their coach is watching." And I think the same can be said for Coach Brown. People ran really hard to impress him. Of course they wanted to do well, but they also wanted to get his vote of approval for what they were doing. He had a great plan because we were very successful - I think we won seven state championships over the past 15 years, we were really a well-known program. But not only did he get more out of his athletes who were in the top seven, he got a lot out of his athletes who were on the jayvee, who were on the bottom of the jayvee. They never were in the paper, but they improved just as much if not more than the guys at the top (Iowa State Regina was usually in either the first or second largest of Iowa's four competitive divisions).

I wonder if it's a function of a small-town life, that one person could have such an effect not just on the team and the school but on the whole town.

MM: We have the University of Iowa in Iowa City, so we're a decent-sized college town, about the same size as Boulder, Colorado. It's a suburban way of life and athletics are big deal in the town, and people read and they know about the success Coach Brown has had. I was talking to a sportswriter at the "Cedar Rapids Gazette," a bigger paper in the area, and he was saying how he, as a reporter, was heavily influenced by Coach Brown, how he uses this (Brown's) phrase "nothing but my best" when he coaches his boys' softball team. They live about 30 miles away, and his wife uses one of the coach's sayings. It's really interesting, the lives he touched, not only the runners he coached but also people throughout the community. There was that woman (in the book) who came up to him and said "you don't know who I am but I know who you are," that sort of thing." He was well-respected not because he won but because his athletes competed with a great sense of character. I think that's why people liked him.

How is it that you fell in love with Colorado? Was it from reading "Running With the Buffaloes?"

MM: That had a huge influence on me, that book. Finally, it opened my eyes that there were other people out there like me who would go to bed early on Saturday night so they could be up early the next morning for their long runs, who basically lived for running, like I did. That showed me there was something out there that I wanted to be a part of. I also grew up going to a summer camp out in Colorado for a month, at a place 45 minutes from Boulder. I've had a love for the mountains and I always wanted to be out there. For me, it worked out that the state I wanted to go to school had that program and the coach. Wetmore was the icing on the cake because I also believed in volume and distance like he did.

He was very kind to me to give me the chance to compete for Colorado, because as a junior in high school, I broke 10:00 for the two-mile for the first time. As a senior, I had a better year, I did 9:30 and 4:23 (for the mile) but that was still on the cusp of the walk-on standards for Colorado. I think by virtue of showing up there over the summer and running, my determination and willingness to show up every day had a big impact on his decision and I'm very, very thankful that he gave me the opportunity because without him, there wouldn't be a story.

You could have been one of the top runners on a lot of college teams, but at Colorado, there were be the Torres brothers and Dathan Ritzenheim, who based on their high school performances were already established nationally, and you weren't going to be in their league. But there was a way you were going to measure success at Colorado that wasn't necessarily based on being one of the top three guys on the team. How were you going to measure your success in that program?

MM: People might say "well, he knew what he was getting into, what did he expect? He's not going to go there and be a top guy." And I certainly didn't plan on that, because it would have been a little unrealistic. When I was there we had three Olympians on the team in Jorge and Dathan and Billy Nelson. For me, I wanted to first make the team, and I thought the best way to be successful would be to slide in and earn a spot on the national championship cross country team. I thought perhaps I could get in there by the time I was a senior and be the fifth guy or the sixth guy - hopefully be the fifth guy and contribute, and that to me would have been amazing. I was on a Big 12 Championship team and alternate for another, and I was really happy about that, because during my four years, no one else won a Big 12 Cross Country Championship. Colorado won all four. But when I started, success would have been going from a walk-on to a national champion as part of the Colorado Buffaloes. By the time I ended there, my definition of success had matured and evolved a little bit.

Into what?

MM: Into the idea that I came there as a walk-on and wasn't even on the team when I arrived in Boulder. Years later, I'd done everything I could to be a good runner. I ran all four years, both seasons (cross country and track), didn't get injured. After I finished my last race there - it was a 5K at the Big 12 Championship, I didn't do all that great, I was like 28th out of 56. But the satisfaction I got was that I could say "I've done the best I could. I could not have done any more." And that kind of goes back to what Coach Brown said - "if you give your best, that's good enough, and the winning will take care of itself." And at the end, I could not have trained any harder, I could not have sacrificed more, I could not have dedicated my life more to running faster in Colorado.

Brown and Wetmore each have their valid approaches, but they were so different. Brown gave you constant approbation. Wetmore was supportive in his own way but it was certainly different and it seems like sometimes you were left guessing as to what your value was there and what his perception was. Was it a tough adjustment to make for you?

MM: Yes, definitely, because you go from Coach Brown, who's so accessible, who makes it a point at almost every practice to say something to every athlete. And for me, especially, being the top runner, we communicated a lot, especially my senior year. And then I go to Colorado, and if Mark said one thing to me all week, I was so happy, I'm like "Mark Wetmore has acknowledged my existence." I was just happy to be on the team. But it takes a while. Mark was always watching, but Mark didn't always say something. You knew when Mark extended a compliment your way, or

even critiqued you, that was a good thing, because you knew he really meant it. It took a while to get used to. It's college athletics. You're there to win championships. He has a budget and he had to make more of a business approach than Coach Brown did.

I know Coach Brown meant a lot to you beyond the cross country course or the track itself. Now that you've been in New York and working for a while, do you ever find yourself in a situation where you ask yourself "what would Coach Brown want? What would Coach Brown do?"

MM: Yes. Many times. The story's about the importance of mentors. I've moved to New York and I wanted to do something in writing, and over the past four years, as I've written this book, I've reached out to a lot of editors and a lot of writers, just to see if something would click, if any of them would take me under their wing a little bit - not even like a mentor, but we could talk about writing. A couple of people have been nice to me and helped me and answered questions, but I feel like that (a mentor) is the one thing I've lacked. I don't mind being poor in New York. That's fine, I totally understand, I can come here and live with not a whole lot of money. But the thing that's really hard for me is that I haven't been able to find a Coach Brown figure, someone who will be there for me, who'll help me look to the future for my writing.

When I first moved to New York, I didn't have a job, I didn't have any friends, and I didn't have a place to live. I didn't know anyone in the entire city. And so I often pulled out his (Brown's) quotes and said "did I do the best I could today," that sort of thing. And that really helped me. Did I talk to the right people today, did I send my resumes to the right people, did I have a good interview? It's come out a lot. Coach Brown had the ability to make the slowest person on the team feel just as worthwhile, worthy, as the fastest person on the team, and he gave as much of his time, probably even more, to the slower people. He always felt the fastest people would get theirs with the newspaper headlines and state medals and stuff like that. And the magazines I worked for were very much the opposite. The top people got treated really well, and anyone entry level on the bottom was there to do their bidding. They really didn't even know who you were. And I thought about Coach Brown a lot. I wish I had him. People might have thought he was a silly small-town Iowa coach. But I would have loved to have had him be a manager at this company (publication) because I knew he could have made people feel good about themselves.

You lived in a house with both Torres brothers in Colorado, right?

MM: Yeah, with Jorge and Ed, and Dathan (Ritzenhein) also lived there, and two or three other guys cycled throughout the years. They called it Fight Club, but Mark (Wetmore) called it the Country Club, because it has a giant 60-inch flat screen TV and a hot tub with jets. And it's a log cabin with a creek running out in front. It was an ideal experience for someone like me, or any distance runner, to live with those three guys and be able to watch them and see what they do. It was like a class in how to be the best distance runner in the country. We didn't really have parties. We lived a different life from most of the students at Colorado, but that was okay. We were very close while we were there together.

Of course, at the same time, these guys kill you at practice. You're not even in the same ballpark as them. You come back home and you have to live with them that night and sometimes you think you need a little break from all of this, to me in my own time. And running was what everyone was always thinking about. But overall, I was very fortunate to live there.

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Comments

The interview is a fascinating look into the author's soul and that of his mentors...I am anxious to read it.

Posted by: [Jim Seifert](#) | [Aug 28, 2009 8:05:12 PM](#)

I just finished the book. I grew up near Iowa City and competed with Regina. Now I live practically next door. It's great to hear these stories about the guy who did the things that I dreamed about.

Posted by: [Mark](#) | [Sep 1, 2009 9:17:47 AM](#)

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