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sports weekend

CU's Gelso wins nordic race; rival DU in first

By Nick Groke
The Denver Post

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Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club alum and current University of Utah skier Sarah MacCarthy took part in the classic cross-country event Thursday at the NCAA Skiing Championships at Howelsen Hill.

Four years ago, days after the Turin Olympics ceased to be the center of the skiing universe, when the best stateside snow competition moved to Steamboat Springs, the University of Colorado ski team rallied from under Denver's nearly insurmountable lead to win the NCAA championship.

On Thursday, days after Vancouver's Olympics faded and Ski Central again made its way to Steamboat, the Buffaloes strode toward another

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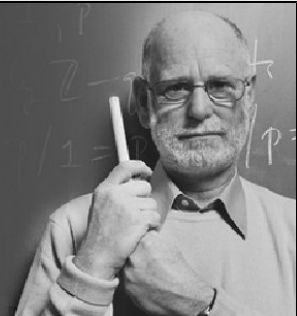


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big comeback in the biggest collegiate meet of the season.

Colorado's Matt Gelso, who was in third place when he passed the halfway mark of Thursday's nordic 10-kilometer classic race, sprinted down the stretch to a national title in 29 minutes, 25.5 seconds. Gelso, just the second American-born men's skier to win an NCAA classic title, edged Vermont's Franz Bernstein by 24 seconds.

Denver's Antje Maempel was hardly threatened in the women's 5K classic, as she cruised to a third consecutive national nordic title. Her time of 16:03.4 was 46.7 seconds better than Dartmouth's Rosie Brennan.

"Antje won . . . in astounding fashion," DU nordic coach David Stewart said. "In a 5-kilometer race, that is an almost ridiculous margin of victory."

At the meet's halfway mark, Denver leads the team race with 420 points. Colorado trails at 351, jumping four spots after Wednesday's first day. New Mexico (319), Utah (300.5) and Vermont (287.5) round out the top five.

Despite CU's comeback in the team standings, it was little surprise the Pioneers and Buffs are 1-2.

Two-time defending champion Denver owns 20 national championships in the 56 years of the meet. Colorado has won 16 — and has twice finished runner-up the last two years.

It's an ongoing rivalry that never seems to let up.

"I think we're in the hunt," CU coach Richard Rokos said. "Coming from sixth to second is a huge confidence booster. It really puts everything on the line for the slalom. It's a make-it or break-it day. It'll be a rodeo tomorrow."

NCAA skiing at Steamboat

The NCAA ski championships returned to Steamboat Springs this week. Colorado and the University of Denver are in the hunt for another title. The schedule, all at Howelsen Hill: Today: alpine slalom

Men, 5:15 p.m. and 8:15 p.m.

Women, 6:30 p.m. and 9:15 p.m.

Saturday: nordic

Men's 20K freestyle, 10 a.m.

Women's 15K freestyle, noon

STAY ON THE COUCH

It's almost bracket time.

Used to be the NCAA basketball tournament selection show on CBS was must-watch TV for bracket-breakers across the land who penciled in the teams for their Monday office pools. Well,

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in the old days, there was no selection show, just straight to the first round.

But nowadays, the brackets pop up everywhere online seconds after the NCAA announces the teams. So the selection show takes on new character. CBS's bracket show — airing on KCNC-4 at 4 p.m. Sunday immediately after the Big Ten championship game (snore) — should give some early clues for upset picks.

Which teams have to travel? Which matchups are historically one-sided? Which teams are streaking? Which are skidding?

And if all else fails, which teams have the coolest mascots?

GET OFF THE COUCH

Irish-themed races.

For the themed races, this year's St. Patrick's Day falls on an unfriendly Wednesday. Who wants to run green through the streets midweek? That's why this weekend, three Paddy-themed races run up and down the Front Range. Better early than never.

In Denver, find the Runnin' of the Green! Lucky 7K and Classic Irish Jog. Starting at 10 a.m. Sunday, the 22nd edition of the race runs through LoDo and benefits Volunteers of America (active.com).

In Colorado Springs, try the 5K for St. Patrick's

Day at Acacia Park on Saturday at 10 a.m. The flat, fast, down-and-back course should be fun and easy — and it includes a kids' Shamrock Scurry (csgrandprix.com).

And in Fort Collins, the Sharin' O' the Green 5K Run/Walk goes through Library Park at 7 a.m. Saturday. The race will be followed by the city's St. Patrick's Day parade (partnersmentoringyouth.org).

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE

It's Pacquiao vs. Clottey.

Manny Pacquiao, the pound-for-pound best boxer in the world, will put his WBO welterweight title on the line Saturday against Joshua Clottey. The bout will play out at the \$1.2 billion Cowboys Stadium in Dallas, where a capacity crowd of 42,000 is expected. Of course, if Cowboys owner Jerry Jones could sell 100,000 seats, he'd do it. And fight fans in the top row would not miss any sweet science details. The 72-foot-high, 160-foot-wide TV screen hanging over the ring would take care of that.

The fight, airing on HBO pay-per-view, should be an entertaining affair.

AROUND TOWN

Time for Mammoth turnaround.

At the National Lacrosse League season's halfway point, the Colorado Mammoth has yet to

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live up to expectations. An offseason roster turnover was meant to bring a fresh face to a team that has been among the NLL elite in recent years.

But at 2-6, with a four-game losing skid on its schedule, Colorado needs a turnaround now. And quick.

The Mammoth on Saturday hosts the Edmonton Rush (5-3), a team just a half-game back of first place in the Western Division. The Rush this season have excelled with the help of Gavin Prout, who was sent North in the offseason in a trade with Colorado.

The Rush earlier this season topped the Mammoth 14-13 in Denver, one of five one-goal games among Colorado's results. The Mammoth is 2-3 in those games.

Jamie Shewchuk's 32 points pace Colorado this season. The 7 p.m. game, at Pepsi Center, airs on Altitude2.

Brian Langtry picks up Jamie Shewchuk in celebration of Shewchuk's goal. *Michael Martin Photography*

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Bufs move up to No. 2

CU ski team carves way up standings at national championships

By Kayla Cornett on March 12, 2010

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The second day can be sweeter for skiers.

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The CU ski team moved up from sixth to second place in team standings the second day of NCAA Skiing Championships

Thursday, with 351 points. The Buffs trail just the University of Denver, who continues to lead the championships with 420 points.

All six CU competitors in the classic cross-country race finished in the top 20, contributing to the incredible jump the Buffs made in the team standings.

On the men's side, senior Matt Gelso took the crown as the NCAA classic 10-kilometer champion, with a time of 29 minutes and 25.5 seconds. Senior Vegard Kjoelhamar placed fourth in the race with a time of 29:54.5, and junior Jesper Ostensen finished 20th with a time of 30:49.8.

Gelso is just the second Buff to win the classic race at nationals and earned first-team All-America honors for the first time since his freshman year.

Gelso said he is very pleased that he won this race.

"This was a goal of mine that I made at the end of last year since this is my last year eligible to ski for NCAA," Gelso said. "I succeeded in that and I have a chance to win another one so I'm pretty excited."

The women's side faired just as well in the 5-kilometer classic race. Freshman Joanne Reid took fourth place with a time of 17 minutes and 9.9 seconds while sophomore Eliska Hajkova placed three spots below her at 17:17.4. Junior Alexa Turzian finished 19th with a time of 18:10.4.

Reid claimed the best finish by a CU freshman in the classic race at the NCAA's since 2006 and it enables her to earn first-team All-America status.

After the race she said that she wasn't trying to accomplish anything like she did on Thursday.



CU's Vegard Kjoelhamar and Matt Gelso, from left. Kjoelhamar finished fourth and Gelso won the 10K Classical race. (Courtesy CUBuffs.com)

"I wasn't really thinking about place, I just went out there to try my best, and do what I could for my team," Reid said in a news release.

CU Nordic coach Bruce Cranmer said he was pleasantly surprised by Reid's feat.

"I always have high expectations," Cranmer said in a news release. "I knew Joanne had the ability to be there, but in a classic race I was thinking top 10, but top four, I was super psyched about that."

Gelso said both the men's and women's teams did well, even if it wasn't some of the skiers' best races.

"Some people didn't quite have the days that they wanted, but I definitely think they're staying positive and they can have good races on Saturday," Gelso said.

CU head coach Richard Rokos said both teams gave important performances that have affected the entire team.

"The whole Nordic performance gives the team a second chance," Rokos said in a news release. "I think we're in the hunt."

On Friday, the Alpine skiers will return to the slopes in slalom while the cross-country skiers will hopefully ski for a national championship in freestyle on the final day of competition Saturday.

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer Kayla Cornett at kayla.cornett@colorado.edu.

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