

Woelk: Bikes, Buffs and other sports tidbits

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News and views as we wait not-so-patiently for summer's arrival ...

Not that anyone's expecting a revival of the late, great Coors Classic -- but I have to admit, it would be fun to see such an event in and around Boulder again, particularly when you consider two of the hottest young cyclists in the nation are from these parts.

Taylor Phinney just keeps getting better and better. Honestly, the kid could end up winning another world championship or two, an Olympic gold medal and a handful of Tour de France stages -- if not the whole doggone thing. He's that good.

Meanwhile, Fairview grad Mara Abbott won another Tour of the Gila title over the weekend, and I wouldn't be surprised to see Abbott also wearing a U.S. Olympic jersey someday. A former swimmer who got a late start in the sport, she's quickly making up for lost time.

Now, just imagine those two racing in front of about 20,000 folks in North Boulder Park. ...

On the topic of up-and-coming talent, keep an eye on budding Colorado middle distance ace Emma Coburn. The Buffs sophomore ran the fastest time in the world this year in the 3,000-meter steeplechase a couple of weeks ago, and last week clocked a very respectable 4:21.37 in the 1,500 at the Payton Jordan Cardinal Invite at Stanford. We'll bet that before her career is over, she'll make a run at a few of Jenny Barringer's CU marks. ...

Most impressive numbers from CU in the last few weeks? Try the 19 Buff student-athletes who were honored last week for achieving a perfect 4.0 grade-point average for at least one semester. Take it from someone who accomplished that only once in his entire college career, it's a difficult task to achieve (a 2.0 in the fall and a 2.0 in the spring equals a 4.0, right?).

Seriously, the fact that so many CU athletes held down what amounts to a full-time job and were still able to achieve perfection in the classroom is borderline astounding. Hats off to them. ...

Switching gears to baseball for a moment, the guess here is that the race for the NL Cy Young this year will be a doozy - and one of the early favorites has to be Colorado's Ubaldo Jimenez. His April numbers (5-0, 0.79 ERA) were flat-out terrific, and he won his sixth game Monday against the Padres.

But there's going to be lots of competition. Look around the league and you'll see Philly's Roy Halladay, San Francisco's Barry Zito and Tim Lincecum, and St. Louis' Chris Carpenter also with great starts. It might be the best overall crop of NL pitchers in a while. ...

Tim Tebow? Great choice. He'll win in Denver, and those that derided Josh McDaniels' gamble will conveniently forget their criticisms. Great athlete, great character and burning desire to win. Don't bet against that combination. ...

As for the Nuggets, it's time for some serious changes. They've played the same hand for several years, and what's clear is that it's now going the wrong direction. Did you see Kenyon Martin's line from Game 6 vs. the Jazz? More fouls (five) than points (four) and rebounds (four), plus an incredibly dumb and costly technical foul in nearly 38 minutes of play. Time for the Nuggets to jettison the oft-injured Martin, see what they can get for J.R. Smith and Nene, and retool. Otherwise, next year is another one-and-done playoff appearance.

Not that we're ready to call it a trend, but neither do we think it's an aberration. College athletic departments are starting to rein in costs by tweaking contracts for new coaches.

Both of Colorado's new hoops coaches, Tad Boyle and Linda Lappe, have contracts that will pay them less than their predecessors. But, they also have plenty of incentive bonuses that can greatly increase their pay.

The message? If you win, the department wins, and you'll be rewarded accordingly.

Other new coaches that have contracts that pay less than their predecessors? Fred Hoiberg at Iowa State, Turner Gill at Kansas, Lane Kiffin at Southern Cal and Bobby Hauck at UNLV, just to name a few. ...

And finally, a question for CU fans:

Last week, I wrote that Jeff Bzdelik did what few coaches before him have done at Colorado -- in any sport. Bzdelik left a program in better shape than it was the day he arrived.

How many other coaches in the last 40 years at CU can say the same?

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