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CU plans to take home more Big 12 championships

Bufs brave weather in preparation

By Gina Yocom on October 30, 2009

The CU campus may have been closed because of a winter storm, but that doesn't mean anything to the Colorado Buffaloes cross country team.

Running in the snow is nothing new to the Buffs, who say they are too focused on taking home the Big 12 Conference Championships to let a little weather get in their way. The Buffs will compete in Columbia, Mo. on Saturday beginning with the women's 6-kilometer race at 9 a.m. The men's 8k race follows at 10 a.m.

Why are these Big 12 championships so important to the Buffs?

"The conference meet is one step along the way to the NCAA championship," head coach Mark Wetmore said. "If we have assembled or designed the recipe correctly, then we're 85 percent fit with four or five weeks to go and we would hope that would be good enough to get the job done."

For the men's team, Wetmore said there is a motivation to have a better performance than last year.

"We were disappointed in our performance a year ago from the men's side, and it's almost the same team," Wetmore said. "So, I am looking forward to them demonstrating the steps they have taken in the past 11-and-a-half months."

The women's team is also expecting an improvement from last year, he said.

"On the women's side is a mixture of veterans who were dissatisfied last year and brand new people," Wetmore said. "Our women were fifth a year ago and we're looking forward to being a lot higher than that Saturday."

As far as the team goes, some say it's all about having fun running with their teammates. Winning the conference will be an added bonus.

For senior Kenyon Neuman, it will be his last conference tournament appearance, one he said he is eagerly awaiting.

"I'm looking forward to running with all my teammates and racing with everyone," Neuman said. "For me, it will be my last conference meet. So, yeah, just running with all the guys and hopefully winning the meet and having an effort with everyone."



On Oct. 2, Kenyon Neuman (#14), Jordan Kyle (#965) and Matt Tebo (#15) compete in a cross country meet in South Boulder. (CU Independent file/Lee Pruitt)

Meanwhile, junior Laura Thweatt's spirits are high, especially after the women's team won both of their team meets this month.

"I'm really excited to get out there with the team," Thweatt said. "We're really great this year. This is one of the best teams we've had since I've been on the program. We had a great pre-national's race two weeks ago, so were coming off a high from that. So, I think we're going to get out there and have another great day."

Both the men's and women's teams say they are enthusiastic at the prospects of a win, but it doesn't mean the course is going to be easy, their coach says.

"The challenge always remains the same, which is to evaluate the geographic conditions of the course, and to evaluate the weather conditions and manage them as well as possible – hopefully, better than our opponents," Wetmore said.

Thweatt said this course will be the hardest challenge yet.

"It's a really hilly course I've heard," Thweatt said. "I haven't seen it yet. We have to make sure we pay attention to what's going on, not go out too fast and run a smarter race than our opponents."

So far, the Buffs have won 23 conference titles under Wetmore's watch (the men have taken 12 and the women, 11), and say they are looking forward to adding more conference titles on Halloween. Taking home the 24th and 25th conference titles looks hopeful.

The Buffs' mentality could be summed up by Thweatt: "We just keep truckin'."

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer Gina Yocom at Gina.yocom@colorado.edu.

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