

Redemption on minds of CU men's harriers

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Jenny Barringer has been in the international spotlight for more than a year now.

And the Olympian and four-time NCAA track champion will be the favorite to win an individual national championship in cross country this fall before graduating as one of the greatest athletes in Colorado history.

Meanwhile, the CU men's cross country team -- coming off a disappointing 12th-place finish at the 2008 NCAA championships -- quietly prepares for the season without much fanfare or expectations outside of Boulder.

"I encourage it," senior Jordan Kyle said. "I encourage anyone to say that CU is off the radar right now."

Kyle, who finished 14th individually at the NCAA championships last season, believes the Buffs are going to sneak up on a lot of teams this fall and return to national prominence.

History is certainly on his side when you consider that 2008 was the first time the CU men placed out of the top-10 under head coach Mark Wetmore. The last time the Buffs were below 10th was when they took 11th in 1992. The lowest previous finish under Wetmore was seventh in 1999 and 2007.

"The way we finished was a driving force during our training for this season," Kyle said. "Everyone was in good shape at the NAAs and it was disconcerting to see how we finished as a team because we were more fit than that."

Also returning with NCAA experience are junior Richard Medina (64th overall), senior Kenyon Neuman (115th), junior Matt Tebo (146th) and sophomore Christian Thompson (did not score).

After the NCAA championships, Wetmore said his coaching and the effort of the other runners failed Kyle's solid performance.

"Out of our top seven last year, only three had run (in the NCAA championships) before and they weren't very experienced at it," Kyle said. "We didn't know how to run that race yet, but I think the experience is really going to help us this year."

The Buffs open the season on Saturday by hosting the CU Open/Alumni/Time trial. The men's 8K will begin at 8:30 a.m. with the women's 6K at 9:15 a.m. at the Buffalo Ranch Course on CU's south campus.

On Monday, the 2009 CU Kickoff Classic 5K will be held at Potts Field to benefit the CU cross country and track and field programs. Anyone interested in "running with the Buffaloes" can register at the Boulder Running Co. (28th & Pearl; 303-786-8255) or Fleet Feet (2624 Broadway; 303-939-8000).

Colorado Soccer Classic

The Buffs, coming off a dominant 8-1 victory over St. Mary's last Sunday, hope to continue the offensive power surge today against the University of Denver at Prentup Field. The second game of the Colorado Soccer Classic is scheduled to start at 4 p.m.; Oregon plays Colgate at 2 p.m.

The Pioneers (2-0-1) only defeated St. Mary's 2-1 at the DU Invitational last weekend, but managed to tie No. 13 Illinois, which defeated the Buffs last Friday.

"These are kids who have played with or against each other throughout their lives. It's a good healthy rivalry between two good teams and two good schools," CU coach Bill Hempen said. "It's kind of a bragging rights game for us."

It only took Nikki Marshall, who played defender in the first two games of the season, 23 seconds to score her first goal of 2009 against St. Mary's. She added a second goal 2:36 into the match and is now second on the program's all-time

scoring list.

The first 500 fans at Prentup Field will receive a free CU soccer T-shirt. DU plays Colgate at 11 a.m. on Sunday with CU taking on Oregon at approximately 1 p.m.

Volleyball team

licking its wounds

Liz Kritza knew there would be growing pains as she rebuilds the Buffs volleyball program, but Tuesday night's three-set loss (20-25, 17-25, 16-25) to Northern Colorado was a real eye-opener for the first-year coach.

"Losses are not accepted well by anyone, players and coaches alike, but this one will prove positive as we get ready for yet another road trip," Kritza said. "We'll go back to the gym and work to improve in the areas that we were deficient in. We have a big weekend ahead and will be ready to compete when we hit the court."

The Buffs (1-2) play Fairfield at 3 p.m. today in the Yale Invitational in New Haven, Conn. The Buffs face both Georgetown and Yale on Saturday.

Notable

The CU women's golf team opens its fall season on Sunday at the Collegiate Match Play Championship on Daytona Beach, Fla.

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