



*Cory Higgins (left), Alec Burks anxiously await Thursday's NBA Draft.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com*



Brooks: Burks, Higgins Await Next Hoops Move

Release: 06/22/2011 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Former University of Colorado standouts Alec Burks and Cory Higgins have been counting the days - now the hours - until this week's NBA Draft provides the first look at their basketball futures.

Call it motherly intuition, foresight or maybe something stronger, but Dina Burks knew early on what the future held for the younger of her two sons.

"Some things I just know; none of this is a surprise to me," she told me earlier this week. "Everybody else is just beginning to realize what a special talent and person he is, but I've known it all along.

"He's always had a basketball; he was kind of born with it. His dad and his grandfather played, his brother played . . . it was going to happen. He's always been a natural and I've always known it. There wasn't this 'oh, wow' thing that happened when he was 5 or 15. It was a God-given gift, just a part of him."

The CU basketball program and Buffaloes fans came to the same conclusion two seasons ago, and the Burks family is hopeful the NBA is on the verge of similar discoveries. Burks is expected to be selected anywhere from No. 9 to No. 12

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in Thursday's first round, while Higgins likely will be a second-round choice or get his NBA opportunity through free agency.

Dina Burks estimates she and her husband, Steve, were able to watch "80 to 90 percent" of Alec's college games and believes they will be able to attend at least that many of his NBA games. She leaves Kansas City on Wednesday morning for Newark to attend Thursday night's event.

"We wouldn't miss it," she said, adding that other relatives also will attend.

Burks and Higgins were CU's top two scorers in each of the past two years, averaging 20.5 points and 16.1, respectively, during a record-setting 2010-11 season that saw the Buffs win a school-best 24 games.

The pair took different routes in pursuit of their common goal to reach the NBA. The lightly recruited Burks made his mark in just two college seasons, while the underrated Higgins benefitted from staying for four years. He left Boulder sharing the school's career scoring record.

Burks has worked out for more than half a dozen NBA teams, completing his circuit on Monday at Utah before flying back to Kansas City - the family lives in Grandview, Mo. - then heading for Newark, N.J., and Thursday night's draft (5 p.m. MDT).

He suffered a dislocated shoulder in a workout in Milwaukee about two weeks ago, but sufficiently recovered to keep this week's appointment with the Jazz. Dina Burks said her son's shoulder is "fine," adding he is "very excited" about what awaits on Thursday.

"This is fulfilling his dream," she said. "He's been able to go to the next level, then the next level, then the next . . . this is just the beginning. It really doesn't matter what team it is (that drafts him); he'll be productive."

Higgins, who in his final season tied Richard Roby (2,001 points) as CU's all-time scoring leader, has auditioned in New Jersey, Detroit, Denver, Milwaukee, Charlotte and Houston. Unlike Burks, he enters the draft with no assurances of being selected.

But, as CU Coach Tad Boyle noted, "There are no guarantees (for either player). First-rounders have to prove themselves in camp just like second-rounders and free agents. It'll be interesting to see where both of these guys end up and what they do with their opportunities. But I do know this: Both of them can play."

Burks is viewed by many analysts as one of the top five shooting guards available, joining BYU's Jimmer Fredette, Washington's Klay Thompson, UCLA's Malcolm Lee and Providence's Marshon Brooks.

Still, the 6-foot-6 Burks' resume features an asterisk or two. While gifted athletically and a stellar ball-handler, his jumper from the NBA three-point range needs honing. And, at a slender 195 pounds (his listed roster weight at CU), there have been questions about him being able to hold up physically in what he calls "a grown man's league."

But this might be chief among Burks' upsides: Physical maturity still awaits him; he doesn't turn 20 until July 20. During an in-season interview with NBADraft.net, he said he was "trying to put on weight every day . . . I don't really let it bother me, but I can understand (NBA teams) wanting me to get stronger, though. (I'm) lifting, eating healthier every day, just (trying to) put on the weight any way I can."

Still, Burks' slender frame wasn't anywhere close to being a detriment in the college game. He routinely got to the rim (and the free throw line) and scored on a variety of acrobatic, jaw-dropping moves - attributes that will aid him at the next level while he improves his perimeter shooting.

Plus, he finished his brief CU career as one of the top rebounding guards in school history, attributing that to "my desire to rebound . . . combined with great athleticism and wanting it more than somebody else wants it."

Burks' two-season scoring average at CU was 19.0 points, third all-time, and he holds both the school freshman (512) and sophomore (779) seasonal scoring records. He was a unanimous first-team All-Big 12 Conference selection in

2010-11, an honorable mention All-America selection (Associated Press) and an all-tournament NIT honoree (24.3 average in four games) as the Buffs advanced to the NIT semifinals in New York in March.

Burks has retained the same agent (Andy Miller) as former CU star Chauncey Billups. But Higgins, of Danville, Calif., still might head into draft day with a bit more NBA savvy than his former CU teammate. Higgins' father is Rod Higgins, general manager of the Charlotte Bobcats, and his godfather is Michael Jordan, with whom he became acquainted while working as a ball boy during Rod Higgins' 13-year NBA playing career.

After working out for the Nuggets earlier this spring, Cory Higgins told nuggets.com that his father's occupation and NBA history has helped to "get my head on straight and make me realistic about things and about my future. I think that's the biggest thing - helping me keep my head on straight."

Higgins finished his career holding half a dozen school career records and was the only Buffs player to total at least 2,000 points (2,001), 500 rebounds (547), 300 assists (320) and 150 steals (192) - tangible proof of a well-rounded game.

At about 180 pounds, the 6-5 Higgins is as wiry as Burks, if not more so. Higgins also is considered a shooting guard but he often played the point position at CU, with that versatility and his hoops IQ hopefully increasing his NBA value.

"I can play two positions and guard two positions, more importantly," Higgins told NBA.com. "I think that's the biggest value I have in trying to make an NBA team."

While Burks is in no way considered an under-the-radar NBA prospect, Higgins believes being undervalued might benefit him. He's banking on NBA teams recognizing his pedigree, his court IQ, and offering him the chance to land on a roster.

Unlike Burks, Higgins won't have an up-close-and-personal view of the upcoming draft proceedings. That's by choice. In fact, Higgins said he might not view it at all: "I'm not going to think about it, to be honest. I don't even know if I'm going to watch it (on television). I'm just going to see how it goes (and) take the next step."

Burks' first step toward the NBA was his most difficult. He decided in April to declare his eligibility for the draft. The only advice Dina Burks gave her son during that process was the same when he was deliberating on a college: "Just pray about it. When we make big decisions, that's what we do. He was comfortable with (deciding to come out); he had a peace about it."

Alec eventually earning his degree "has always been part of the plan," his mother said. "I've told him that, his grandmother has told him that. His brother (Steve) graduated last year from Peru State (Nebraska). It's just something we do in this family - we graduate.

"It may take him a little longer, but eventually he'll get it finished."

On Thursday night, he'll get his future started, following the plan Dina Burks always knew was out there.

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Ringo: Billups offers right example for Burks to follow

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 06/22/2011 11:18:28 PM MDT

Alec Burks woke up this morning still that soft-spoken, likable young man from Kansas City who has made a name for himself as a pretty good college basketball player the past two years at Colorado.

He will go to bed tonight the new prized draft pick of an NBA franchise with promises of \$4-6 million coming his way over the next three years, depending on when he is selected in the league's annual draft this evening.

Let's hope it doesn't change him.

Sure, it's a tongue-in-cheek statement in some respects.

Traveling from one NBA city to the next for individual workouts and being told how bright your future is will change anyone.

Meeting and getting to know some of the greatest players in the world who you've been idolizing for years is going to change anyone.

Becoming a millionaire overnight is going to change anyone. And the myriad experiences still in store for Burks as he transitions to the league would surely change anyone.

But they don't have to change him so dramatically that the young man we've all come to know these past two years gets lost in the process.

I'm hoping Burks already understands or quickly realizes that his work is not over just because he has achieved his dream. It's really only beginning.

This is a young player after all. One who really only has two years of high-level basketball under his belt.

He's good, but he has a long way to go before any NBA coach is going to feel comfortable matching him up against Kobe Bryant or Kevin Durant or LeBron James, unless he's facing James in the fourth quarter of a playoff game. Then, maybe.

There are blueprints available from which Burks can learn and they come from former Buffs. Guys who have gone before him and made choices that led them in different directions once they fulfilled their dream of earning an NBA roster spot.

Burks is used to being pointed in the direction of former Buff Chauncey Billups. And for good reason.

The two players are the best to come out of the program here in Boulder in the modern era. They are guards and it's natural to compare them. Since Billups came first and is universally known as a good guy, people are always suggesting Burks could learn a thing or two from his CU mentor.

Billups was the third overall pick in the 1997 draft following two seasons in Boulder. He has played for six different franchises during his 13-year career, including two stints with his hometown Denver Nuggets.

He was frustrated early in his career, moving between five different franchises over six years before finally finding his groove with the Detroit Pistons, where he eventually became Most Valuable Player of the NBA Finals.

Billups worked hard on his game, remained humble despite his millions and his fame and stayed true to his inner compass that always pointed him home to Denver and back to Boulder when times have been tough or when he has just needed a break.

But while striving to emulate Billups, perhaps Burks should keep David Harrison in mind.

Harrison, the Buffs' former All-Big 12 center, barely sneaked into the first round of the draft back in 2004 when he was selected 29th overall by Indiana.

He lasted only four years in the league, which statistics say is more likely for Burks and most of the other players drafted today than lengthy stays such as Billups' career.

Harrison also struggled with injuries and personal issues, including his admitted regular use of marijuana, which probably had an effect on his longevity at the highest level of the game. These are some of the world's best athletes after all.

Harrison also let his temper get the best of him at least twice during his career.

He was involved in the infamous brawl with Detroit Pistons fans at the Palace at Auburn Hills during his rookie year and the Pacers suspended him for one game in 2008 following a postgame incident in the locker room after he was hit in the face during the game by San Antonio forward Matt Bonner. Harrison's temper and complaining about officiating was a hallmark of his CU career as well.

No one is saying Harrison was a thug or a bad guy. In fact, I loved covering him. He remains probably the most fascinating personality I have written about in Boulder.

But if you're Alec Burks, it's obvious which former Buff he should be taking his cues from as he moves on and tries to make more of his dreams come true, such as becoming an NBA All-Star and winning a world championship and maybe playing in the Olympics some day.

There is still plenty of work to be done by Burks if he hopes to match Billups' success and longevity.

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CU Buffs Alec Burks set for NBA draft

Shooting guard expected to be lottery pick

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 06/22/2011 06:18:41 PM MDT

Thursday's NBA Draft will include free advertising for the Colorado basketball program.

Alec Burks, who decided to leave CU with two years of eligibility remaining, is expected to be a lottery pick (top 14) during the proceedings, which air nationally on ESPN from the Prudential Center in Newark, N.J.

Tad Boyle and his staff will gather at the CU head coach's house to watch Burks' hoops dream realized.

"It's great for the program, and obviously it's great for Alec," Boyle said. "It's a win-win. When he made the decision to come out, this is what he was shooting for."

Burks struggled with that decision throughout a spectacular sophomore season, in which he averaged 20.5 points and 6.5 rebounds during the Buffs' program-record 24-win campaign.

The unanimous All-Big 12 first team selection truly enjoyed being a college student, but ultimately Burks made a shrewd business move entering the work force now, considering this draft is rated as one of the weakest in NBA history.

"After the season, I felt like I was already a lottery pick," Burks said at his press conference announcing his decision to forego his final two seasons at CU. "A lot of top players that might have been in front of me or behind me are coming back to school. I felt like it was perfect timing for me."

Burks, a prototypical NBA shooting guard at 6-foot-6, is one of eight players who has been a consensus lottery pick in all eight of the most popular Internet mock drafts.

"The pressure is off me now. I'm just glad it's over," Burks told reporters in Salt Lake City after his final workout of the process for the Utah Jazz. "I just know I'm going to be a lottery pick, so it's going to be in that range."

Most draft experts believe Burks will not slide beyond Milwaukee at No. 10 or Golden State at No. 11.

"At that point, you've got to start looking at best player available," former NBA player and current NBA TV studio analyst Steve Smith said. "Alec Burks of Colorado will be the best player available for (Milwaukee)."

Duke's Kyrie Irving is expected to be the No. 1 pick by Cleveland, followed by Arizona's Derrick Williams to Minnesota. The wild card in this class is BYU's Jimmer Fredette, a Tim Tebow-like personality projected to go anywhere from Sacramento (No. 7) to New York (No. 17).

No matter when Burks walks out on stage to shake hands with David Stern, it's going to be great exposure for CU.

"It will be nice to see him go so high, hopefully," Boyle said. "I think that will give us a lot of energy, in terms of recruiting and trying to find the next guy to fill those shoes."

Since finishing the spring semester in May, Burks has worked out for the Charlotte Bobcats, Cleveland Cavaliers, Milwaukee Bucks, Phoenix Suns, Sacramento Kings, Utah Jazz and Washington Wizards.

"It's been a grind," Burks told Slam Magazine after arriving in New York on Monday. "A blessing but a grind at the same time. People don't understand, behind-the-scenes, how hard we work."

Two years ago, Burks was just a skinny freshman-to-be taking his first college class and lifting weights seriously for the first time in his life. He was the Big 12 Freshman of the Year during his first season at CU under Jeff Bzdelik and an

honorable mention AP All-American last season for Boyle.

"A lot of people didn't expect this from me, and I probably didn't expect this from myself," said Burks, who was not heavily recruited out of Grandview, Mo. "A lot of people felt like I was going to come out here, go back home, and work at the local price shop or something.

"I proved a lot of people wrong. I worked hard for this day."

Bzdelik, a longtime NBA scout and former Denver Nuggets head coach, knew Burks had the raw talent to play at the next level as soon as he arrived in Boulder three inches taller than when he committed to CU.

"The only question mark for me was how he would react under brighter lights," Bzdelik said. "It didn't take very long for him to demonstrate that. He embraced the bright lights at that level."

Burks has hired the same agent, Andy Miller, as Chauncey Billups, who has been a CU ambassador in the NBA since being selected with the No. 3 pick in the 1997 draft.

"Obviously, Chauncey has had an unbelievable career. But as high a pick as Chauncey was, it just shows you how much work there is, because he struggled his first few years in that league," Boyle said. "I don't know what road Alec is going to take, but hopefully he will have success and the kind of career Chauncey has had."

Cory Higgins, who graduated as CU's all-time leading scorer (tied with Richard Roby), is a possible second-round pick. His father, Rod, is an executive with the Charlotte Bobcats.

"Everybody's road is going to be different," Higgins said. "I'm going to take it wherever it goes."

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Posted on Wed, Jun. 22, 2011

Grandview's Burks looks to join KC's NBA hoop club

By BLAIR KERKHOFF
The Kansas City Star

The club seeks some new blood.

Players from Kansas City-area high schools who reach the NBA haven't welcomed a member in more than five years.

That figures to change tonight.

Alec Burks, the Colorado shooting guard who three years ago led Grandview High to the Missouri Class 5 title game, is poised to become the area's next first-round selection in the NBA draft.

Most projections for tonight's draft have Burks selected anywhere from 10 to 20, and if things fall right, a second Kansas City product could hear his name called. Willie Reed played at several high schools, the last was Bishop Miege, before spending two seasons at Saint Louis University.

Whatever the future in the NBA holds for them or anybody who comes out of Kansas City, the bar for success has been set by a handful of players, with perhaps Lucius Allen topping the list.

Ah, the list. The Star counted 23 NBA players who finished at a Kansas City-area high school, and that does not include Danny Manning, whose only season at Lawrence High was his senior year.

So, Allen, the former Wyandotte High star who played at UCLA and then in the NBA for 10 seasons, racked up more career points (9,407) than any other NBA or ABA player from the area.

Allen is more than 1,000 points ahead of another former Wyandotte star, Larry Drew, now coach of the Atlanta Hawks, and Paseo's Anthony Peeler.

"I didn't realize that," Allen said. "But while in high school, I thought I had a chance to play professionally and be a good player."

That's because of a friendship Allen struck up with Bill Bridges, the former University of Kansas star who spent his first two professional years with the Kansas City Steers of the American Basketball League. Bridges invited Allen to the Steers' workouts.

"Some of those ballplayers were starters, and they couldn't stop me," Allen said. "Now, I couldn't stop them either, but all the sudden I was thinking these guys aren't much better than me. They missed the shots I missed.

"I was able to carry that mentality into my senior year of high school and on to college. Because of that experience, I always felt like I belonged."

Allen, 63, who lives in Los Angeles and is a sales trainer for Bristol-Myers Squibb, a pharmaceutical company, helped Wyandotte continue its dominating run with state championships in 1964 and '65. Allen won two national titles at UCLA and joined his Bruins teammate Lew Alcindor, later Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, in winning an NBA championship in Milwaukee in 1971.

A lightning quick point guard, Allen averaged 13.4 points over his NBA career that finished with the Kansas City Kings. His best season was spent with two teams, the Bucks and Lakers, in 1974-75, when he averaged 19.1 points and 5.6 assists.

As productive and successful as he was, Allen doesn't believe he's the best player to emerge from an area high school. He doesn't even think he was the best in the metro area while he was playing.

"Warren Jabali," Allen said. "He was Warren Armstrong then. One-on-one, I didn't have a chance against him."

Jabali played at Central High and then Wichita State before spending his seven-year professional career in the ABA. He was the league's rookie of the year in 1969 when he averaged 21.5 points for the Oakland Oaks and averaged a double-double the next season. Jabali was a four-time ABA All-Star.

In the mid-1960s, Allen was the best player on the Kansas side of the metro, Jabali on the Missouri side. They and their friends would find each other for pickup games on school playgrounds in the summer.

If Allen was about finesse, Jabali was brute strength. Both players were 6 feet 2.

"But he intimidated me," Allen said. "He was a physical specimen."

Allen knew he was pro-bound by holding his own against tough competition, and that idea didn't change over the years. Just the venue.

For Kareem Rush, the former Pembroke Hill star who has played seven seasons in the NBA, the same type of measuring stick was applied.

"I was about 12 when I started thinking about what I could become," Rush said. "AAU ball became a big part of that. I learned I could play with some of the best players."

Rush was playing with the Children's Mercy Hospital 76ers, a team that included future NBA players Corey Maggette and Mike Miller. The team's story had a sordid ending, with players suspended from their college teams and a coach jailed for mail fraud and tax evasion.

Rush missed his first nine games at Missouri under NCAA suspension but went on to lead the Big 12 in scoring as a sophomore. He has averaged 6.4 points in seven NBA seasons (2,213 career points) and expects to return to the NBA after missing the last 18 months while rehabilitating a torn ACL. His production puts him in about the middle of the area players in the NBA.

At the bottom of the list is Derek Hood, the Central High standout of the mid-1990s, who appeared in two games for the Charlotte Hornets in 1999 but didn't score.

Where will Burks slide in?

Draft analysts like Burks' size and athletic ability but throw up caution signs when it comes to shooting.

"If he was a better shooter he'd be a top-five pick," said ESPN draft expert Chad Ford. "So, if you're talking about him in the 10-to-17 (draft) range, I think there's value there. He's an athletic player who can improve his jump shot."

A player often compared to Burks is Washington State's Klay Thompson, who is considered one of the best shooters in the draft.

"Burks is a different kind of player, a driver who can get into the lane, a very good passer," said Jay Bilas, who covers college basketball for ESPN. "But Thompson is the superior shooter."

And if Burks develops in the NBA, perhaps he can operate some pickup basketball, like Allen did in Los Angeles, among former Kansas City players.

"Guys would come out, Larry Drew, Leonard Gray, Pierre Russell, we'd play some pickup like in the old days," Allen said. "And we'd talk our Kansas City trash to each other."

Kansas City area's best pro scorers

Player	High school	Points
Lucius Allen	Wyandotte	9,407
Larry Drew	Wyandotte	8,110
Anthony Peeler	Paseo	8,017
Warren Jabali	Central	7,666

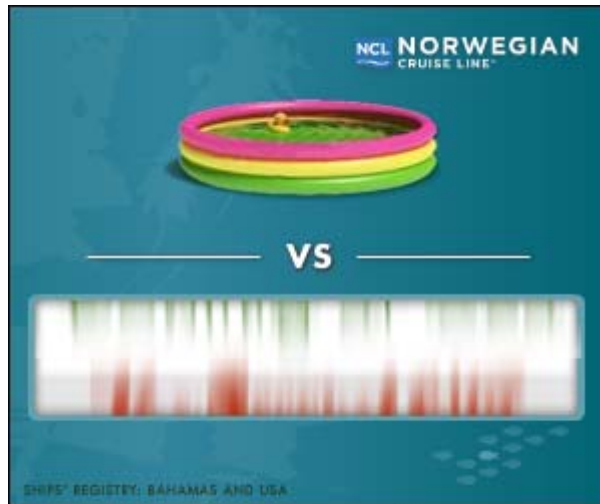
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Goucher back in swing of things after giving birth, finishes second to Flanagan in 10,000

By Associated Press, Published: June 23

EUGENE, Ore. — Kara Goucher is getting back into the swing of things nine months after giving birth to her son.

Goucher finished second to Shalane Flanagan in the 10,000-meter run Thursday night in the U.S. championships, earning a spot at worlds later this summer.

She's also come to a realization in her career: Maybe the marathon isn't her strong suit right now. So good in the 10,000, Goucher might just focus on that for the time being. She finished fifth at the Boston Marathon earlier this spring.

"I love the marathon, but I feel like I'm hitting my head against the wall there," Goucher said. "I miss the 10K. I miss kicking. I miss that excitement. I want to take this summer and do that. No pressure."

As she made the trek around the stadium, Goucher was closely accompanied by her husband, distance runner Adam Goucher, who was carrying their son, Colt.

Steadily, Kara Goucher is beginning to feel more like herself.

"I keep thinking I feel like myself, but then another four weeks go by and I'm like, 'This is what it's like,' Goucher said. "I'm really hard on myself: I wish I'd have done better in Boston, wish I would've been more prepared tonight."

Flanagan turned in a strong performance, holding off Goucher by nearly 17 seconds. Jennifer Rhines was third.

"I wanted to run aggressively tonight," Flanagan said. "I've been running somewhat conservative in my opening track races. Tonight, I just wanted to come out and run hard and see who wanted to play at my pace."

WHO'S THAT MASKED MAN?: With his allergies bothering him, 10,000-meter winner Galen Rupp began the race with a black mask covering his face.

Near the end, though, he ripped it off, no longer needing it.

Rupp turned in a convincing win Thursday, pulling away from Matt Tegenkamp late in the race for his third straight national title. But he wasn't about to attempt a personal-best time, not with his allergies acting up.

"It was a smart decision," Rupp said. "To say I ran a PR, ran really fast, but I don't make the team because my lungs are sore and I can't do anything for two weeks, it really isn't worth the risk. There are going to be plenty of other times to run a fast 10K."

FIRST AND FOREMOST: Stephanie Brown Trafton put the pressure on her fellow competitors with her first discus throw of the day.

The field wouldn't come close to matching the mark as the 2008 Olympic gold medalist added another national title to her impressive resume. Brown Trafton's throw of 207 feet, 10 inches edged Aretha Thurmond by more than a foot.

Starting fast has become quite a trend for Brown Trafton. At the Beijing Games, her first toss was good enough for gold, as well. In high school, she also won a state meet in California with a big opening throw.

All part of her psychological ploy.

"When my first throw is pretty awesome, it's more that my competitors are trying to come back from that," she said. "My competitors are like, 'Oh no, she's in it to win it.' They've got to be able to step up. That's just the way it goes."

FLOWER POWER: Middle distance runner Alysia Johnson's name has changed, but her sense of style has remained the same.

Now Alysia Montano, she still wears a bright flower in her hair during races.

On Thursday, in the opening heat of the 800, Montano ran with a red blossom that matched her Nike top.

"That was an accident," Montano said of the color coordination.

The two-time U.S. champion won her heat in 2 minutes, 3.50 seconds.

However, she threw the track announcer for a momentary loop since she was listed as Johnson in the program but had Montano stamped across her bib. The former University of California standout married to Louis Montano on March 19.

As for the flower, she said it's simply a way to express her individualism.

"I used to always play football with the boys and was the safety," she explained. "I played on that a little bit, grabbing a flower and putting it in my hair. I'd tackle them with a flower in my hair."

GATOR RAID: It was quite a day for the Florida Gators in the triple jump, with Christian Taylor capturing the national title and teammate William Clay taking second.

That's the way things went for the talented twosome at the NCAA championships earlier this month, as well.

"Christian helps me and vice versa," Claye said. "It is really helpful having both of us push each other."

Taylor won the event with a leap of 57 feet, 44¾ inches on his second attempt.

"It's always fun coming to Oregon; it truly is Track Town U.S.A. here," Taylor said.

CLAY'S COMEBACK: Bryan Clay finished the first day of the decathlon in second place — about what he expected as he eases into the season.

Clay, the 2008 Olympic gold medalist, missed all of 2009 because of an injury to his hamstring and after a good 2010, he's taking his time getting tuned up for this year and beyond.

"We knew I wasn't going to be sharp for this meet," Clay said. "We started sharpening things up two weeks ago. Things aren't quite where they need to be. Normally, I'd be much further into a peak phase coming into this meet."

He needs to finish in the top three to earn a spot at world championships in Daegu, South Korea. If he does that, he's confident he'll be sharp when they roll around in late August — and then he'll try to build some momentum for the Olympics, 13 months from now.

Halfway through this year's nationals, Clay trailed Ashton Eaton by 408 points. Eaton, an Oregon athlete and three-time NCAA decathlon champion, knows he's catching Clay at the right time.

"Clearly, he's not at peak levels," Eaton said. "If he was, I think it would be different for me."

AROUND THE TRACK: Michelle Carter won the women's shot put with a mark of 65-2, edging Jillian Camarena-Williams by a scant half an inch. ... Jarred Rome won the men's discus title.

AP National Writer Eddie Pells contributed to this report.

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Shalane Flanagan, Kara Goucher go 1-2 in the women's 10,000 meters at U.S. championships

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Special to The Oregonian

By



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Thomas Boyd, The Oregonian

Shalane Flanagan celebrates her win in the 10,000 meters on day one of the USA Track and Field Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene on Thursday.

EUGENE – Portland residents Shalane Flanagan and Kara Goucher are two of the queens of U.S. marathoning, but both of them identify races in the 10,000 meters as the highlight of their careers.

That helps explain, at least partially, why Flanagan and Goucher are shoving the marathon off to 2012 and focusing on the track this summer.

In Thursday's final at the U.S. championships at Hayward Field, Flanagan bolted to the front in the first 100 meters and then pulled away and ran comfortably to the win in 30 minutes, 59.97 seconds.

"It was a nice rhythm, 74, 75 seconds. It felt natural," Flanagan said. "My coach said to treat it like a five-mile tempo run and then go that last mile when you might have to do something."

Goucher, working to regain the form she had in 2007 when she earned a bronze medal in the 10,000 meters in the World Championships at Osaka, Japan, was second in 31:16.65.

"I really wanted to commit and go for it

and a lap in my coach was like 'Calm down!'" Goucher said.

Instead, she decided that making the U.S. team that will compete at the World Championships in Daegu, South Korea and earning the IAAF 'A' standard was more important than pressing the issue against Flanagan, who is the U.S. record holder.

Veteran 10K/marathon runner Jen Rhines placed third to make the U.S. team with 31:30.37, while 2011 Boston Marathon runner-up Desiree Davila was fourth in a personal best 31:37.14.

"Honestly it shows the depth of U.S. distance running," Goucher said. "The U.S. women in the 10K and marathon are at a different level than we've ever been. In the past, maybe there were one or two standouts. Now we have a whole squad."

Flanagan, a bronze medalist in the 10,000 at the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, has yet to declare her intentions for next year's London Games. A sparkling marathon debut in New York last fall has given her something to think about.

What is certain is that all of the top U.S. women in Thursday's race are planning to be on the starting line of the Olympic Trials marathon next January in Houston.

This summer, Flanagan and Goucher are both eager to recapture their medal glory in the 10,000. Daegu, like Osaka (in 2007) and Beijing, has a reputation for being hot and sticky, issues that make running a marathon there unappealing.

Even though Flanagan and Goucher are in different Nike running camps, the goal of medaling in global events is what drives them both.

And Flanagan, who owns the U.S. record in the 10,000, feels ready to compete for medals this summer. She is on the start list for tonight's 5,000 and said she would consult with her coach, Jerry Schumacher, about the possibility of doubling.

"Running under 31 (minutes) two times already (in 2011) bodes well for being in the hunt," she said.

Goucher's training partner, Amy Begley, who is coached by Alberto Salazar, was sixth in 32:34.75. She returned to training just a month ago after recovering from a stress fracture. Begley won the 10,000-meter title in 2009 and 2010.

Michelle Carter and Jillian Camarena-Williams both threw lifetime bests in a great duel in the shot put, producing the third-and fourth-longest throws in U.S. history.

Carter threw 65 feet 2 inches on her second attempt, which held up for the win.

Camarena-Williams threw 65-1 1/2 on her second attempt and followed up with a potential U.S. record mark that hit the ground out of the sector. She also threw 65-1 1/4 on her fifth try.

"I'm very happy," Carter said. "This tells me that the work I've been putting in is paying off."

Only U.S. record-holder Ramona Pagel has thrown farther than Carter and Camarena-Williams did Thursday. Pagel's record, 66-2 1/2, has been the national record since 1988.

"That was an amazing competition," Camarena-Williams said. "You can never count Michelle out. She busted a huge one today. I'm just looking forward to competing at Worlds and having two great Americans competing at that level."

One spot out of making the U.S. team, 20-year-old Alyssa Hasslen of McMinnville could hardly believe she placed fourth after a rocky NCAA championship meet for the University of Arizona.

Hasslen threw a lifetime best 57-7 1/2.

"It hasn't hit me yet," she said.

Olympic champion Stephanie Brown-Trafton won the discus with her first throw of 207-10. Aretha Thurmond challenged that mark with sixth-round throw of 206-3, but she settled for second.

Brown-Trafton said she planned to celebrate a few blocks away at the 19th Street McMenamins.

"I don't know if they made it especially for me last time, but when I won here the last time they made me a special corn dog," Brown-Trafton said. "So I'm looking forward to that."

--Doug Binder, special to The Oregonian

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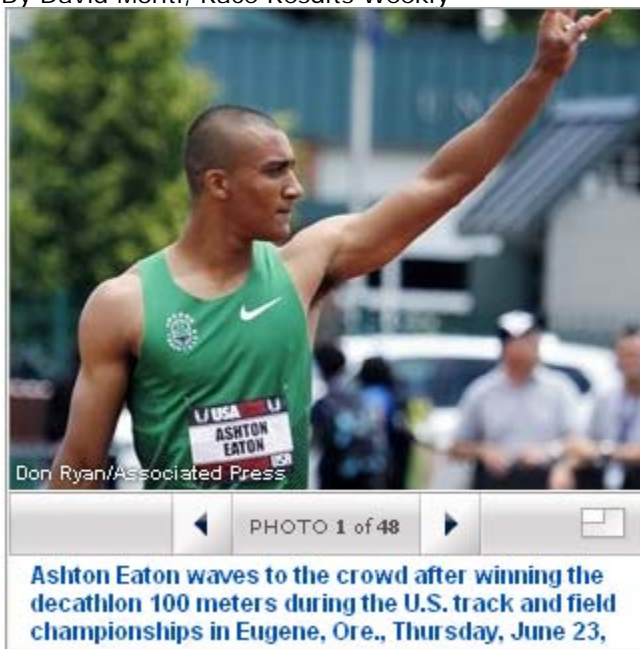
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Dominant victories for Flanagan, Rupp in 10,000m at Nationals

Kara Goucher earns Worlds berth in 10-K, gives up marathon slot in Daegu
By David Monti, Race Results Weekly



EUGENE, Oregon -- The first full day of competition at the USA Outdoor Championships at the University of Oregon here came to a close with dominant victories for Olympians [Shalane Flanagan](#) and Galen Rupp at 10,000m. Using completely different tactics, both athletes earned berths on Team USA for the IAAF World Championships in Athletics in Daegu, Korea, in August.

Flanagan, 29, decided to take full advantage of the cool and dry conditions here to attack her race and run from the front. She took the lead immediately, running 73 seconds for the first lap, and quickly built a five-second margin over her key rivals, [Kara Goucher](#) and Jen Rhines, who would run most of the race together.

"I wanted to run aggressively tonight," Flanagan told reporters after the race. "I've been running somewhat conservative maybe for some of my opening track races, and tonight I felt like I just wanted to come out and run hard and see who wanted to play at my pace. I just wanted to run my own race tonight and make sure I just made that ticket to Daegu and take care of business."

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Flanagan, her blonde hair pulled back in a ponytail, hit the first kilometer alone in 3:03.9, then settled in at 3:06 pace through halfway (15:33.9). Behind her, Goucher ran on the Rhines's heels, while Flanagan's lead slowly grew. By 6000 meters, the 2008 Olympic bronze medallist was ten seconds up on the pair who eventually split up at 7000 meters when Goucher pulled ahead of Rhines. Goucher later said she had been holding back and viewed the veteran Rhines as a reliable pacemaker.

"I just tucked behind Jen and made sure I qualified," Goucher explained while husband Adam held their son, Colt, nearby. "I still needed the (qualifying) time and all that stuff, and to just go out and blow up wasn't a good risk at this point."

Flanagan sailed through 8000 meters in 24:57, then squeezed her pace down to about three minutes for each of the last two kilometers to finish in a championships record 30:59.97, bettering Deena Kastor's mark of 31:09.65 from the 2004 Olympic Trials. Behind her, both Goucher and Rhines held their positions for the final laps, and finished second and third in 31:16.55 and 31:30.37, respectively. Running under the IAAF "A" standard of 31:45.00 Goucher locked in her team spot (Rhines had already achieved the standard earlier this year).

Just behind them, marathoners [Desiree Davila](#) and Magdalena Lewy Boulet ran personal best times of 31:37.14 and 31:48.58, respectively. Two-time defending champion Amy Begley, who had been hampered by injuries, finished sixth after getting lapped by Flanagan, her 2008 Olympic teammate.

For Rupp, tonight's contest was a long run, but a short race. After numerous lead changes in the first half, the pack was still jogging around the track, clocking 70 to 72-second circuits. Each of the 22 athletes in the race were within two seconds of the leaders at halfway. Rupp, who ran the first half wearing a special black facemask with an anti-pollen filter to protect him from an allergic reaction, was watching his position.

"I just really didn't want to get boxed in since it was a little slow in the start," Rupp told the press after his victory. "Everybody was there."

When he saw that there were three laps to go, Rupp started to speed up. He ran a 65-second lap, then cut his pace down to 58 seconds for the penultimate circuit. Matt Tegenkamp, who had felt totally comfortable up to that point, began to feel some pain.

"I really didn't notice it, honestly, until about the last 700 meters," said Tegenkamp, who was widely thought to be running tomorrow's 5000m, instead. "He just really ran smart," he said of Rupp. "(I) felt great until about 200 meters to go, then it was just like the bear jumped on my back."

Rupp blasted the final lap in 54.44, to leave the rest of the field in his wake, and notched his third consecutive national 10,000m title. Tegenkamp ran 56.08 for the final lap to hold onto second place, while a surprising Scotty Bauhs found his best form to beat both Bobby Curtis and Tim Nelson and capture third place.

"I just wanted to make sure I was in a good position when it was time to kick," Rupp continued. "I just tried to stay as relaxed as I could. When it was time to go you try to make it definitive and drive all the way to the finish."

Both Rupp and Tegenkamp have the IAAF "A" standard of 27:40.00, and Bauhs has the "B" standard of 28:00.00, so all three locked in their team slots for Daegu. Bauhs was especially thrilled. When asked if his effort tonight was the best race of his life he said: "Absolutely, absolutely."

* * * * *

In earlier qualifying action, none of the favorites were eliminated in the women's 1500m. The best marks were put up by Christin Wurth Thomas and Morgan Uceny in the second of two heats, running 4:08.32 and 4:08.68, respectively. Jenny Simpson won the first heat in 4:14.20, and Olympians Anna Pierce and Shannon Rowbury all advanced. The University of Oregon's Jordan Hasay was the last of 12 qualifiers, making the cut by just 1/100th of a second.

In the men's 1500m, Andrew Wheating won the first heat easily in 3:39.88, which would turn out to be the fastest time of the day. The former Oregon Duck, who won the NCAA 800m and 1500m titles last year, relished running in front of the Hayward Field crowd.

"This is what track is," said an ebullient Wheating. "We were having so much fun before the race, staying focused but in a fun way." He continued: "When we got out there, I mean, I felt butterflies in the stomach, but when we were going off, I felt back in my element, felt total love for this sport, having a great time."

Wheating's training partner Russell Brown failed to advance when he couldn't hold his speed in the final sprint of the third heat. He finished fourth, and did not run fast enough to advance on time.

[Bernard Lagat](#), Leo Manzano, Lopez Lomong, and David Torrence, all of whom have a good chance to make the team, advanced.

In the first round of the men's steeplechase, defending champion Daniel Huling advanced after leading his heat until the final 20 meters, when he slowed to a jog and finished fourth.

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