

CU Buffs' Emma Coburn set to make leap

Junior has one goal: national title

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It's time for Emma Coburn to make a splash on the national stage.

Former Colorado All-American Jenny Simpson (formerly Barringer) brought a lot of attention to women's steeplechase in this country as the top American finisher in the event at the 2008 Olympics, and also by winning NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championships in 2006, 2008 and 2009 while running for the Buffs.

Two years ago, as a true freshman, Coburn finished 11th in the 3,000-meter steeplechase finals as Simpson was wrapping up her brilliant career at CU. Coburn was relatively new to the event and also ran the 800 and 1,500 that season.

Last year, Coburn took the torch from Simpson and broke her former teammate's Big 12 meet record en route to a conference title in steeplechase. At the NCAA outdoor championships, she finished as the runner-up to Penn State senior Bridget Franek.

The goal at this week's NCAA outdoor championships in Des Moines, Iowa, is pretty clear for the talented junior from Crested Butte.

"I want to win," Coburn said during a recent interview with the Camera. "I got second last year and I'm a lot fitter than I was last year. I think I'm ready to run a hard race to be able to win. That's kind of everyone's goal going who finished in the top group last year.

"It's going to be tough and there are a lot of girls who run well, but that's definitely my goal, to come away with the championship."

Coburn defended her Big 12 title this season and won the NCAA West Preliminary meet in Eugene, Ore., with a time of 9 minutes, 55.03 seconds. She has the nation's top time this season (9:40.51), set on May 1 at the Stanford Invitational. "Emma enters as the favorite," CU head coach Mark Wetmore said in a release. "She is ready. Her training is good and she is going to finish very high in the meet. We hope she can win."

The Buffs' Shalaya Kipp, a sophomore who was fifth at the NCAA outdoor championships in 2010, was second in the steeplechase at the regional behind her teammate with a time of 10:00.03.

"We think that she might be able to finish higher than her ranking," Wetmore said of Kipp. "Her training has also been good. She trains with Emma every day, so we'd like to see her place a little higher than fifth."

The NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships begin today at Drake Stadium. The national semifinals for the women's steeplechase are at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday and the finals are at 11:54 a.m. on Saturday.

On the men's side, CU redshirt sophomore Joe Bosshard has qualified in the 5,000- and 10,000-meter runs. At the regional meet, he ran the 11th-fastest 5K in CU history (13:34.44) to qualify for the NCAAs. He finished eighth overall in the 10K with a time of 29:15.57.

"The last month has been a little bit unreal with how things have gone. I always knew I could run well enough to be successful, but things would always pop up and it didn't quite work out," Bosshard said. "Things have started to go my way and I've surpassed any of my expectations. Now the sky is the limit in my mind."

Bosshard earned All-American status with a sixth-place finish at the NCAA championships last year in the 10K. This year's finals in the event will run at 7:50 p.m. on Thursday.

Alan Culpepper (1996) and Adam Goucher (1998) both won national titles in the men's 5K for the Buffs. This year's finals are at 12:21 p.m. Saturday.

"They are all physically and psychologically ready to go," Wetmore said. "The weather forecast for Des Moines is at least a B-minus for Coloradoans, so we have every reason to believe that they will all do well."

CBS College Sports TV will broadcast the championship live on Friday from 5:30-7:30 p.m. and CBS will show the final events on Saturday from 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Live streaming options are available for other events at NCAA.com and GoDrakeBulldogs.com. Live results will be available at flashresults.com.

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