

American women back with eye on Bolder Boulder win

Former Buff Metivier-Baillie leading way for U.S. squad

By **Ryan Thorburn** Camera Sports Writer
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It hurt so good.

Moments after the 2010 women's International Team Challenge the three members of Team USA -- Renee Metivier-Baillie, Magdalena Lewy-Boulet and Amy Hastings -- vowed to return this year with a better overall strategy.

The Americans finished third behind traditional powers Ethiopia and Kenya.

"We finished and we were like, 'that was so hard, we want to do it again,'" Metivier-Baillie said. "We really enjoyed it. Coming into that stadium ... I've watched it before, but running it is a whole different level. We entered that stadium, and 50,000 people were screaming, and your heart is pounding. We were happy, but also a little disappointed with how we did.

"We said all three of us were going to come back a year older, a year stronger, and run it smarter."

Metivier-Baillie, an 11-time All-American at Colorado who trains in Boulder, admits that she got her team off and running too fast last year in the 10K.

Individual champion Mamitu Daska, who is back to defend her title, set the hasty pace, and her Ethiopian teammates were able to stay with her, finishing second and sixth for a total score of only nine points.

"I'm from Boulder so they kind of looked to me to know the course and I took it for granted. I didn't actually run the course, which is silly," Metivier-Baillie said. "And I'm learning from my mistakes. I'm a track runner, so I kind of underestimated the roads and the hills. We're definitely going to work together as a team and be focused on that middle section."

Metivier-Baillie finished ninth last year with Hastings 11th and Lewy-Boulet 14th for a score of 34. The same trio won the bronze medal representing the U.S. at the 2010 World Cross Country Championships in Poland.

As a former Buff, Metivier-Baillie received a loud ovation when she entered Folsom Field last Memorial Day. She would like to find out how emphatic the roar would be if Team USA were in position to end Ethiopia's two-year reign as champions.

"I may not have had my best race last year, but when I entered it got even louder," Metivier-Baillie said. "If we pull this off, which we hope to, I think it's going to be quite loud."

On the men's side, the Ethiopian team -- which will have a completely new cast of characters from last year -- is seeking a fifth consecutive International Team Challenge victory.

Kenya has finished as the runner-up to Ethiopia five times since 2005 and hasn't won the event since capturing the first four titles from 2000-03.

"One thing I do know for a fact is the Ethiopian team has brought their best and they're ready to run," said Bolder Boulder co-founder Frank Shorter, the 1972 Olympic gold medalist in the marathon who won this race 30 years ago. "The real reason they're here, essentially, is they want to beat the Kenyans. And we know that and it's a great tradition."

Shorter said he wishes Team USA and Great Britain had a similar rivalry at the Bolder Boulder. But the Americans do have a spirited competition with Team Colorado.

In 2010, Brent Vaughn, James Carney and Aaron Braun led Team Colorado to a second-place finish. Team USA, which included Jason Hartmann and Fernando Cabada, was fifth.

This year Carney and Braun are on Team USA with 2008 Olympian Ryan Hall. Hartmann and Cabada are on Team Colorado with Brian Medigovich.

"On the American team side, what I love about this is the U.S. men's and women's teams and the Colorado men's and women's teams are, to a certain extent, interchangeable," Shorter said. "If last year is any indication, there isn't much difference in terms of prestige."

The experience of the Americans and the team concept should make for an interesting race.

"Experience helps. I know the level of pain I'm going to be feeling the last two miles. It plays a factor for sure," Hartmann said. "People are relying on you more to compete instead of you relying on yourself. That gives you the extra incentive to push through the pain you're going to feel."

The women's professional race starts at 11 a.m. with the men to follow 11 minutes later. The professional wheelchair races open the Bolder Boulder at 6:55 a.m.

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Thorburn: In worst of times, these Buffs were one of best

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Memorial Day Weekend is a good time to remember the great players who left the Colorado basketball program early for the draft.

And I'm not referring to Chauncey Billups and Alec Burks.

The 1941-42 Buffs, coached by the legendary Forrest B. "Frosty" Cox, were ranked No. 1 in the country during a magical season that served as a much-needed distraction for fans and students as the dark clouds of war hung overhead.

CU was led by a pair of All-Americans, Robert Doll and Leason McCloud, known simply as "Bob" and "Pete" to their teammates.

These two stars, who were key cogs in the Buffs' 1940 National Invitation Tournament championship, manned the double post in Cox's methodical ball-control offense.

Doll had an unstoppable move in which he would whirl and then hook the ball over defenders. McCloud was a prolific scorer during a time when baskets were tough to come by.

Heath Nuckolls, a scrappy kid from Pueblo, was the point guard. Backcourt mate George Hamburg was the unquestioned team leader.

The other starter was Bob Kirchner, a defensive stopper who almost always guarded the opposing team's top scorer and cleared the boards with the best of them.

Other members of the squad included Bob Anderson, Reed Hannon, George Hamburg, Horace Huggins, Bill Milliken, Lloyd Norman, Barney Oldham, Don Putman, Lee Robbins, Paul Schmidt, Don Schrader, Jack Stirling and Martin Trotsky.

Shot clocks and 3-point lines didn't exist in this throwback era. CU usually scored in the 50s and held opponents in the 40s.

Yet every bleacher seat in Blach Fieldhouse had someone sitting on the edge of it.

This was a team to behold, a group of young men worth rooting for, and a story that needed to be witnessed before World War II hit home under the Flatirons.

"We thought about it as much as we should have been," Kirchner, the only known surviving member of the team, said of the war and the inevitability of joining the fight.

"That time, 1941-42, was the beginning of the war and things weren't as unsettled as they got to be later as the war wore on. So many of our good friends were enlisting and off to training. We didn't lose any from the basketball team. At least not that year."

During the 1937-38 season, All-Americans Jim Wilcoxon and Jack Harvey escorted the Buffs to the Mountain States Conference title and an appearance in the first NIT Final Four in New York.

Two years later, CU captured another conference title, cut down the nets at Madison Square Garden, and also played in the NCAA Tournament.

No team in the program's history had a better winning percentage than the talented and motivated 1941-42 crew.

The boys from Boulder opened the season with a lengthy road trip to the East Coast. They wore suits, ties and Fedoras

while traveling across the country by train.

It all started with a 45-29 trouncing of St. Joseph's in Philadelphia on Dec. 27, 1941. The ships in Pearl Harbor were still smoking 20 days after the infamous Japanese attack.

Three nights later, the Buffs beat St. John's 39-33 at Madison Square Garden. The New York media was fascinated with the personable Cox and his well-oiled CU machine.

"That happened every year in those days," Kirchner said of CU's non-conference excursions to the Big Apple. "That was just a normal trip for us. I don't remember ever losing a game back there."

After easy wins over St. Bonaventure (52-28) and Loyola-Chicago (57-43), the Herd headed home.

The Buffs dispatched Utah 49-39 in the Mountain States and Balch Fieldhouse opener on Jan. 9, 1942. CU was off to a 14-0 start following a 52-35 thrashing of Brigham Young University on Feb. 28.

The team's only loss of the regular season was a maddening 40-39 defeat against Wyoming on March 3. The Cowboys — who would win the NCAA title in 1943 — featured Kenny Sailors, who many basketball historians credit with inventing the jump shot, and were coached by Ev Shelton, immortalized in the Naismith Hall of Fame.

"That one game we lost, I believe I'm right that we turned the ball over once," Kirchner recalled. "And Wyoming didn't have a turnover."

CU regrouped and beat Utah State on the road four days later to secure another conference championship. The reward? A trip to Kansas City, Mo., to face Kansas in the NCAA Tournament.

Those who have followed the Big 12 through black and gold glasses are painfully aware that the mighty Jayhawks won the final 18 meetings with CU.

KU leads the all-time series 122-39. That trend started early as the Buffs lost five of the first six games against Dr. Forrest C. "Phog" Allen's teams in the early '30s.

But this was a different brand of Buffs. CU upset the Jayhawks 46-44 to advance to the national semifinals (only eight teams, four from the West and four from the East, were invited to the not-so Big Dance at that time).

"We liked that," said Kirchner, who grew up in Topeka, Kan. "Kansas had one of the best teams they ever had at that time, too. Frosty had been an assistant under Phog Allen, and most of us were from Kansas. What an experience."

The journey ended two days later as the Buffs fell 46-35 to Stanford. The Cardinal went on to beat Dartmouth in the national championship game.

CU did not play basketball during the 1942-43 or 1943-44 seasons due to the war. Most of the players were drafted and began serving before they could even celebrate the accomplishments of a 16-2 season. Some of the Buffs gave the ultimate sacrifice for the country.

After finishing his CU degree, Kirchner served in the Navy aboard the USS North Carolina. He married his college sweetheart, Barbara, in 1944 while the ship was being repaired.

Kirchner was one of the fortunate ones who survived and lived long enough to see Billups, Burks and other CU players carry on the tradition Cox's great teams started.

The 1941-42 Buffs shouldn't be forgotten. During the worst of times, they were one of the nation's best teams.

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