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outdoor extremes — endurance

Meyer: CU assistant track coaches put spotlight on Buffs

By John Meyer
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BOULDER — Moving into third place midway through his 200-meter race at the U.S. Outdoor Track & Field Championships in June, Jeremy Dodson let his mind drift to all the great things that would happen to him if he could stay there.

A spot in the biennial world championships this month in Daegu, South Korea. A series of warm-up meets against top-flight competition in Europe in his first full year as a pro after graduating from Colorado in 2010.

"Then I caught up to myself and said, 'I've got to finish this race first,' " Dodson recalled with a laugh last week.

Dodson hung on, making the world championships 200 trio with Walter Dix and Darvis Patton. Dodson also helped bring the University of Colorado the distinction of having two assistant coaches on the world championships team. Billy Nelson, a CU grad in 2007 and Olympian in 2008, won the steeplechase.

And this on a staff that includes two-time Olympian Casey Malone, a discus thrower who finished sixth at nationals while dealing with knee issues.

Maybe all three will make the Olympic team next year.

"It's amazing," Nelson said. "It definitely shows our program is one of the best out there. I always knew Jeremy was going to make an impact after college — his work ethic, his determination, and he's talented too. I wasn't surprised that he made the team. Every race it seemed like he was inching closer and closer."

Maybe Nelson wasn't surprised, but many outside of Boulder were.

"The real head turner was unheralded Jeremy Dodson," Track & Field News said of the George Washington High School graduate.

"A lot of people are saying he's the big surprise," CU sprint coach Drew Morano said. "If we said we weren't a little surprised, we'd be lying."

Dodson takes a different view.

"I'm a firm believer in God, so I knew he was with me each step of the way," Dodson said. "I was all alone in their eyes, but in my eyes I knew God was helping me get through. So to get third and be surprised about it? It was all supposed to happen."

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It's an exciting time for Dodson, who has none of the arrogance and attitude many sprinters project. He recently signed a contract with Nike, and at Stockholm on July 28 he ran against Usain Bolt. Nine days earlier at a meet in Lignano, Italy, Dodson hung out with Patton and Justin Gatlin.

At the world championships, he will room with Denver East grad David Oliver, a favorite in the 110-meter hurdles.

"For him to be such a veteran, I hope to learn a lot by watching what he does, how he handles himself," Dodson said. "I learned a lot from Justin Gatlin and Darvis Patton in Lignano. They taught me so much, to calm myself down and love what you do. It is a job, but you're here to enjoy life."

While Dodson is striving to demonstrate CU can attract and develop quality sprinters to complement its outstanding distance program, Nelson is reinforcing CU's already strong steeplechase tradition.

Jenny Simpson is the American record-holder in steeplechase. Emma Coburn won the event this year at NAAs and the U.S. championships. Both will join Nelson at worlds. (Simpson is running the 1,500 but may return to the steeplechase next year.)

"It's really cool to kind of have our hands around that event," Nelson said. "I really enjoy the steeple, and I love to have success with a teammate. In 2008, Jenny and I crossed paths with training. Now I have Emma. It's great to be able to share the glory of making the team and winning the title."

As a volunteer assistant, Dodson helps Morano coach CU sprinters, sometimes training alongside them.

"It's Drew's job to tell them," Dodson said. "I guess it's my job to show them."

Nelson helps with the distance runners but his

primary responsibility is recruiting.

"The recruiting season is definitely in full swing, and that's what takes most of my time throughout the day," Nelson said. "We get 10 to 15 e-mails a day, and it's my job to respond, do phone calls, look up stats and keep updated with who we're recruiting . . . and look at results from big meets to see if there are any newcomers we haven't noticed."

He'll miss some work at the end of the month for that trip to South Korea, but having two assistant coaches in the world championships sure can't hurt in recruiting.

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Polumbus steps back in

By Clare Farnsworth

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Just as he did twice last season, Tyler Polumbus is stepping in at left tackle for the Seahawks while Russell Okung is sidelined with a sprained ankle.



Tyler Polumbus has been here before.

That's why there was no panic along the Seahawks' sideline or in the huddle on Thursday night when left tackle **Russell Okung** went out with a sprained left ankle on the fourth play of the Seahawks' preseason opener against the Chargers in San Diego. That's because Polumbus stepped in for Okung last season – not once, but twice – when the first-round draft choice got high sprains of both ankles.

Okung's latest injury isn't as serious as the previous two, and coach Pete Carroll is talking about getting him back for the regular-season opener against the 49ers in San Francisco on Sept. 11. But until then, it's back to Polumbus.

"We've been down this road a little bit last year," Polumbus said Sunday between on-field sessions at the team's training camp. "Unfortunately, it's a little bit of déjà vu for Russ.

"So that's my role right now, and I've just got to be ready to go when my number gets called."

While that comes across as a backup's cliché, it's not only true; it's easier said than done.

"That's just my job – to be ready," Polumbus said. "Whenever something happens I've got to be ready to go in at all times."

Polumbus' path to Seattle last year took a detour through Detroit. When the Denver Broncos waived Polumbus in August, the Seahawks put in a claim – but so did the Lions, whose 2-14 record in 2009 trumped the Seahawks' 5-11 mark.

Momentarily disappointed, but ultimately undaunted, the Seahawks acquired Polumbus on Aug. 31 in a trade with the Lions for a seventh-round draft choice. The Lions were set to release him, but the Seahawks didn't want to chance losing him again.

"I wanted to end up here all along," Polumbus said. "As soon as Seattle claimed me, I really wanted to come here. But I had to go over to Detroit for a few days. They made a move to get me over here and I was really happy about that."

All the Seahawks' targeting practice – led by the efforts of director of pro personnel Tag Ribary – paid off almost immediately.

With Okung still out because of the high sprain of his right ankle he got in the second preseason game, Polumbus stepped in and started the first three regular-season games – including the opener against the 49ers at CenturyLink Field.

"In that first game, Tyler stepped in and played against Greg Manusky's group," Schneider said of the 49ers' former defensive coordinator. "Those guys were playing 140 mph and Tyler played well."

After missing 43 days, Okung returned for the Week 4 game against the Rams in St. Louis. So Polumbus moved to right tackle and started for an ailing Sean Locklear, only to move back to the left side late in the second quarter when Okung's ankle started giving him problems. Polumbus started two more games at left tackle after Okung went down in the Week 7 game against the Arizona Cardinals with a high sprained of his left ankle, an injury that would sideline him for 28 days.

The 6-foot-8, 300-pound Polumbus then slide inside to start at left guard – a position he had not played since high school – in the regular-season finale and both playoff games.

Did someone say versatile? Yes, it was Schneider.

"We wanted to acquire Tyler because of his versatility – left tackle, right tackle, he's played some guard," he said. "Tyler already has played a lot for us, and here he is again."

What you initially see with Polumbus isn't exactly what you always get. He's got size, obviously, but also is athletic enough to play in the blocking system that Alex Gibbs was installing a year ago – before the veteran line coach abruptly retired the weekend before the season opener.

Tom Cable, the ex-Raiders coach who was hired in January to jumpstart a running game that ranked 31st in the league last season, likes his linemen bigger and nastier.

Nasty? Polumbus? Out of uniform, he's soft spoken, articulate and helps developmentally disabled children through his foundation – Tyler's Kids Outreach. On the field, however, he doesn't back down from any opponent or situation.

"Tyler is an aggressive player," left guard **Robert Gallery** said. "When he gets in there he does a nice job and he's fun to play next to."

Back to the mild-mannered Polumbus for a second. During the offseason that was extended by the 136-day lockout, he hosted a camp for kids in Colorado – where he was an all-state blocker at Cherry Creek High School in Greenwood Village, All-Big 12 selection at the Colorado and played his first two NFL seasons with the Broncos.

"We had a great time," Polumbus said. "Those kids put a bigger smile on our face than we do on theirs, seriously."

URL: <http://www.seahawks.com/news/articles/article-1/Polumbus-steps-back-in/9de0db16-1c1e-406f-9f10-2427b22156a2>