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## Former CU Buff Brent Vaughn to race in Olympic Trials 5,000 final Thursday, but faces long odds

By **DANIEL PETTY** |  No Comments



Daniel Petty, The Denver Post

Andrew Bumbalough, left, looks at Galen Rupp, right, down the finish of the men's 5,000 at the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials at the University of Oregon's Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., on Monday, June 25, 2012. Both advanced to Thursday's final.

EUGENE, Ore. — The primary question surrounding the men's 5,000 meter final on Thursday at Hayward Field isn't about who will make the U.S. Olympic team — just, quite frankly, the order of the finish.

Bernard Lagat, Lopez Lomong and Galen Rupp are widely considered to be the most likely candidates for the team because of their superior strength and raw speed. But will Rupp, the Oregon native who dominated the men's 10,000 Monday night, finally be able to beat Lagat — he never has — and have enough left to win, too? Or will it be Lagat, the 37-year-old Kenyan native and now U.S. citizen who has

multiple Olympic medals, World Championship and U.S. championship titles to his name? Or will it be Lomong, who's bumped from the 1,500 to the 5,000 and possesses incredible closing speed?



Daniel Petty, The Denver Post

Bernard Lagat waves to the crowd after finishing his preliminary heat in the 5,000 meters at the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials on Monday.

One other athlete in the field, Andrew Bumbalough, also has the Olympic A standard in the race and, depending how the race unfolds, could be a factor in the early stages. But nowhere among those names is former University of Colorado and Smoky Hill High School star Brent Vaughn, who qualified through the preliminary round on Monday in 13 minutes, 45.87 seconds.

"It's a prelim," Vaughn said Monday after his race. "The idea is to just get through as easily as possible. I knew the time I had to run. I knew I was on pace."

His best chance for making the Olympic team has likely already come and gone. In the 10,000 meters, he finished seventh in 27:55.44, nearly 20 seconds behind fellow CU alum Dathan Ritzenhein for the third and final spot to London. "It had been quite a while since I had raced," Vaughn told The Denver Post. "It's a long race, and I didn't run as tough as I should have. I probably had too much running left in me, but I've got my legs now."

Late in the race, the pack he was running in finally surged to a point at which he could no longer hang on.

Daniel Petty, The Denver Post

Brent Vaughn reacts after qualifying in his preliminary heat of the men's 5,000 meters



at the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials on Monday.

But Vaughn is still, in his words, in the best shape of his life. He and his wife, Sara, had worked under Jay Johnson in Boulder before Vaughn last year approached coach Jerry Schumacher of the Oregon Track Club Elite group about moving to Portland, Ore., to train. Schumacher agreed to bring him into the fold with his other top runners, and two days after that conversation, the Vaughns — including their two young daughters Kalia, 5, and Kiki, soon-to-be 2 — packed up their belongings and drove from Colorado to Oregon.

“It was a really tough move, but for our athletic endeavours, it was a good move for both of us,” Vaughn said. “If we want to put everything in running, just to be more serious,” this is what they had to do.

For the first time, Vaughn is training daily with some of the best distance runners in the U.S. And that kind of work has paid off so far: He has since improved his lifetime best in the 10,000 by 25 seconds, a staggering number at this stage in his professional career, considering he was already racing at a high level.

“I love my new coach,” Vaughn said. “Training with some of the best runners in the world is probably the biggest difference (compared to previous training). Those guys have been to world championships, they’ve competed with a lot of the best runners in the world. I love all of my teammates, and it’s been going really well. Hopefully my racing catches up with my training.”

Qualifying in the men’s 5,000, which is set to begin at 7:38 p.m. local time (8:38 p.m. MT) will be a challenge. Vaughn, who still needs the A standard, estimates he’ll need to run around 13:20 to be in position.

“I’m just going to hang with them,” he said. “I’m fit, I feel good right now, so I’m just going to go race.

“Hopefully I can put it together in the final. That’s when it counts.”

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