



Jenny Simpson was one of three former Buffs to advance to Friday's 1,500 meter semifinals.

Photo Courtesy: Associated Press



Three Buffs Advance in 1,500 meters at Olympic Trials

Release: 06/28/2012 Courtesy: Ron Knabenbauer, Graduate Assistant SID

EUGENE, Ore.—Three former University of Colorado student-athletes advanced to the semifinals of the 1,500-meter run on Thursday evening in the U.S. Olympic Track & Field Trials at Hayward Field. **Jenny (Barringer) Simpson**, a 2008 Olympian, and **Sara Vaughn** qualified in the women's event while **Stephen Pifer** made it through in the men's preliminary round.

BUFFALO EXTRAS

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Simpson and Vaughn both were in the first heat of the 1,500 race, with Vaughn getting out to a great start and leading through the first 300 meters. Simpson, who was in fourth after the first lap, made her way to second after 700 meters and was leading the race with one lap remaining. However, Shannon Rowbury was quickly coming up behind Simpson and passed the Colorado alum to win the heat in 4:16.17. Simpson wasn't too far behind though, finishing second in 4:16.70 and still earning an automatic berth to the semifinals.

"There is so much jockeying around and you know it's going to be slow," Simpson said of the race. "You just have to be fast the last 400 meters."

Vaughn finished fifth with a time of 4:17.08, also earning an automatic berth. Overall, Simpson finished 19th while Vaughn finished in 22nd.

Like Vaughn in the women's event, Pifer got off to a quick start in the men's 1,500-meter run, with him leading the race through the first two laps. However Pifer wasn't able to sustain his position with 800 meters to go and finished eighth with a time of 3:41.47 in the second heat, two spots outside of the automatic qualifying positions.

Luckily for Pifer, his heat featured a very fast pace and he was able to earn one of the six additional qualifying spots based on time. He finished 14th overall.

The men's 1,500 meters semifinals will be on Friday at 5:25 p.m. mountain time. The women's 1,500 meters semifinals will be prior to the men's events at 4:45 p.m. mountain time.

Also on Thursday, two Colorado assistant coaches were in the finals in their respective events, as throwing coach **Casey Malone** was in the men's discus throw final while assistant running coach (and alum) **Billy Nelson** was in the men's 3,000 meters steeplechase final.

Malone, a member of the U.S. team during the 2004 and 2008 Olympics, had his longest throw of 61.11 meters (200 feet and six inches) in the sixth and last round of the final, but the toss was not long enough to get him into the top three and qualify for his third straight Olympics.

Nelson, who competed in the 2008 Olympics, was in the middle of the pack throughout his race, but he wasn't able to break to the front and finished eighth overall with a time of 8:32.21.

One more athlete with CU roots competed in day five of the U.S. Olympic Trials, **Brent Vaughn** in the 5,000-meter run final. Like Nelson, Vaughn was never able to get out of the middle of the pack and finished 13th in the event with a time of 13:51.49.

In addition to Pifer, Simpson and Vaughn, CU athletes will be well represented on Friday at the trials, as senior **Joe Morris** and Buff alum **Jeremy Dodson** will compete in the men's 200-meter run at 2:45 p.m. MT, and seniors **Emma Coburn** and **Shalaya Kipp** will look to qualify for their first Olympics in the women's 3,000 meters steeplechase final. Coburn was the 2011 U.S Track & Field and NCAA Champion in the steeplechase while Kipp is the reigning 2012 NCAA and Pac-12 Conference champion in the event. The steeplechase final is set to begin at 5:45 p.m. mountain time.

Also on Friday, Colorado volunteer assistant coach **Emily Pearson** will begin the Heptathlon.

SHOW MENU



Track and field: Former CU Buff Jenny Simpson briefly shifts focus at U.S. trials

Associated Press Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

EUGENE, Ore. -- For four minutes, Jenny Simpson was focused on a race and not a raging wildfire back home in Colorado.

The 1,500-meter runner from the University of Colorado was all business in her heat Thursday night at the Olympic track trials. But after crossing the finish line, all she could think about was the fire near Colorado Springs that has forced more than 30,000 residents from their homes.

Simpson lives a little bit north in Monument. She doesn't think her home is affected, but is only getting sporadic updates from a house sitter.

"I'm suspicious everyone wants me to focus on my racing here. I'll find out the state of my home when I get home," she said.

Simpson easily made it through qualifying. She finished in 4 minutes, 16.70 seconds, taking second in her heat behind Shannon Rowbury to advance on to the semifinals.

"The rounds are always scary, because there's so much jockeying around and you know it's not going to be fast," Simpson said. "I really planned on holding back, but with 800 to go, I thought everyone was still there. I thought, 'Just go to front and know you're in.'"

"But (the fires), that's what we really should be talking about."

Amid the devastation in the foothills of Colorado Springs, there were hopeful signs. The flames that were advancing on the U.S. Air Force Academy were stopped and cooler conditions could help slow the fire.

The U.S. Olympic Committee headquarters and an athlete training center are in Colorado Springs, but appear safe.

However, about 40 USOC employees were evacuated from their Colorado Springs homes ahead of the fire.

"It's really scary," Simpson said. "There are a lot of friends and family involved."

After the trials, Simpson doesn't plan on returning to Colorado to train. She could possibly work out in Europe, since she's headed there anyway for some competitions.

Fellow former Buff Sara Vaughn also qualified for the semifinals in the 1,500-meter race with a time of 4:17.08. In the men's 1,500 prelim, former Buff Stephen Pifer qualified for the semifinals with a time of 3:41.47.

Vaughn's husband, and another former Buff, Brent Vaughn finished 13th in the final of the 5,000-meter run with a time of 13:51.49. Galen Rupp (13:22.67), Bernard Lagat (13:22.82) and Lopez Lomong (13:24.47) made the Olympic team as the top three finishers.

Meanwhile, in the men's steeplechase, Colorado assistant coach and alum Billy Nelson was eighth in 8:32.21. Evan Jager won in 8:17.40.

Casey Malone, also an assistant coach for the Buffs, was sixth in the discus with a long throw of 200-6. Lance Brooks won the discus with a mark of 213-9.

Rory Quiller of Louisville, and the son of former CU track and field/cross country coach Jerry Quiller, finished tied for eighth in the pole vault finals with a mark of 17-81/2. Brad Walker won the event with a 18-71/4 vault.

Among today's highlights will be CU teammates Emma Coburn and Shalaya Kipp competing in the women's steeplechase.

Jenny Simpson runs at U.S. Olympic trials; heart in Colorado Springs

By John Meyer The Denver Post The Denver Post
Posted:

DenverPost.com

EUGENE, Ore. — Jenny Simpson cruised through the first heat of the 1,500 meters at the Olympic trials Thursday evening with her mind on business and her heart back home.

The reigning world champion in the event and former CU star, Simpson lives in Monument and trains at the Air Force Academy. Her heart aches for those who have been affected by the Waldo Canyon fire.

"That's what we really should be talking about — as much attention to the Waldo Canyon fire as possible," said Simpson, who finished second in her heat and qualified easily for Friday's semifinals. "It's really scary - there's a lot of friends and family involved. My house is totally fine, we're going to be OK, we're east of (Interstate 25), but (it's) truly, truly a tragedy."

Simpson asked for donations to Save Colorado Now or the Red Cross.

"It's a scary thing to have so many friends out of their houses and potentially not going to be able to go home," Simpson said. "We have someone house-sitting and I feel like he's not giving us enough updates. I'm suspicious that everyone just wants me to focus on my racing here, and I will find out the state of my home when I get home."

There have been some pre-evacuations in the area where Simpson lives, but she is more worried for the entire Colorado Springs community.

"You know what? Everyone here should be concerned and should be checking in, because our Olympic Training Center is down there and a lot of people there have been affected," Simpson said. "A lot of the staff, some of them have lost their homes."

Simpson competed in the 2007 world championships and 2008 Beijing Olympics as a steeplechaser before leaving CU, but she switched to the 1,500 meters and won a gold medal last summer at the world's championships in Daegu, South Korea.

Four years ago, she was a solid favorite to make the Olympic team in the steeple. Now, even as a world champion, making the team won't be easy. In a sense, there's less pressure.

"Four years ago, there was so much expectation," Simpson said. "My (personal record) was far out there, and there were three women that kind of separated themselves. I feel like that was worse than now, where there's five or six women with the A standard, and it's going to be a pure race. It's not like, 'Don't screw this up.' It's more like, 'Just go out and race,' and as long as I do what my fitness indicates, I'll walk off the track knowing I did all I could do to make the team."

Simpson set the American record in the steeplechase at the 2009 championships in Berlin, a record she still holds.

She's not running the steeple here, but she is rooting for two current Buffs who could make the Olympics in that event — Emma Coburn and Shalaya Kipp. The steeplechase finals are Friday night.

Coburn had the fastest time in prelims Monday night.

"I'm ecstatic," Simpson said. "I saw Emma at dinner (Wednesday) night. I told her '(Friday) is going to be one of the most memorable days of your life.' There's no doubt in my mind she's going to make the team and do well."

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Pifer advances to semifinal race

Posted: Friday, June 29, 2012 10:27 am

The process didn't please Stephen Pifer, but the result is he lives to race another day.

The former Edwardsville Tiger distance running star ran a time of 3:41.47 in the 1,500 meter run at the Olympic Track and Field Trials on Thursday in Eugene, Ore. to advance to the semifinal race. The semifinals are scheduled for 6:25 p.m. today in Eugene.

Pifer's time was good for eighth in his heat and 14th overall. The top 24 move on from the quarterfinals to the semifinals.

While he's glad to still be alive at the trials, Pifer wasn't too pleased with the way he ran on Thursday. He competed in the second of three heats.

"I thought I ran pretty smart the first two laps," he said by telephone Thursday night. "I knew there were a certain number of time qualifiers, so I thought early in the race I would just pace myself to try and beat the time qualifiers. Basically you're racing against the guy who finished seventh in the heat before. I thought I could make it that kind of pace and then after a couple laps hopefully step out and get somebody else's pace and give yourself time to recover and kind of recharge for the last kick. When I did that I got myself pretty boxed in and I didn't have anywhere to go. I was pretty disappointed that when the other guy took the lead I didn't ride him all the way to the front and then relax. I got myself in a really, really bad position. I had plenty of running left in my body, I just didn't have anywhere to run. I caught a lucky break for sure today."

The standards to advance to the semifinals were, the top six from each of the three heats automatically moved on and then the next six times qualified also.

Pifer actually led the first two laps of his heat. His first split was a time of 43.67 with the second split clocked at 1:01.29. But in the third and fourth laps he found himself boxed in and unable to make his push.

He said that's unacceptable in a race with so much riding on the line.

"That's not going to cut it at this level," said Pifer.

Fortunately, he had it figured that he was still advancing to today even after his subpar performance Thursday.

"Because I beat two guys in my race and four guys in the race before mine and only six guys don't advance on, I knew the furthest back I could finish in my race was eighth place and I was guaranteed through," Pifer said. "I just knew I had to be faster than the guys in the heat before me,

so as soon as I finished I knew I was through, but you're disappointed because you didn't run intelligently."

Today he realizes the qualifications to advance to the finals, scheduled for 6:37 p.m. on Sunday, are going to be slightly different. There will be two heats of 12 today with the top six from each heat moving on to Sunday. Pifer will run in lane one in the second heat today.

"The focus (for semifinals) is you have to be top six," said Pifer. "There are no time qualifiers, so it's just about competing against guys. It's man-to-man combat, you've got to beat guys and it's as simple as that. You've got to beat people and come up with the right move at the right time. I can't afford to have any bonehead moves like I did today.

"Everything is on the line tomorrow. All your eggs are in that one basket. I prefer an honest race and I feel that I'm in good shape right now and this first race kind of helped me blow out the cobwebs."

AROUND THE AREA — Carlinville's Kelsey Card, fresh off of her freshman season at Wisconsin got her first taste of the Olympic Trials on Thursday.

Card competed in the shot put, but saw her efforts to make the U.S. Olympic team come up short. She turned in a throw of 51-9.25 which placed her in 20th. The top 12 advanced to today's finals at 5:30 p.m.

In the discus, New Berlin High School and Miliken University graduate Lance Brooks will be making the trip to London. Brooks' throw of 213-09 was good enough to finish in first place at the trials. It outdistanced Jarred Rome's of 207-10 which was good for second place.

Brooks marks the second U.S. representative from southern Illinois to make the Olympic squad, joining East St. Louis graduate Dawn Harper who finished first in the 100 meter hurdles. Harper is looking to defend her gold medal from Beijing four years ago.

Today watch for Carrollton native and SIUE graduate Alicia Deshasier as she competes in the preliminaries for the javelin throw at 4:30 p.m. There are two flights today with Deshasier throwing in the second heat. The top 12 javelin throwers will advance to the finals at 4:45 p.m. Sunday.