

CU Buffs Shalaya Kipp making name for herself

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Coming into this spring, Shalaya Kipp knew she had the ability to be one of the top steeplechase runners in the country.

On Sunday, the Colorado junior put herself at the top of the list for now.

Kipp ran the fastest collegiate steeplechase of the season at the Payton Jordan Cardinal Invitational in Stanford, Calif., clocking in at 9 minutes, 43.09 seconds.

"That was actually a lot of fun, yeah," she said. "It kind of felt good to go out there and run fast."

Kipp was third at nationals in the 3,000-meter steeplechase last season. CU teammate Emma Coburn won the event, but Coburn is redshirting this spring. Last year's national runner-up, Stephanie Garcia of Virginia, graduated.

"(Winning the national title) is one of my major season goals, coming off of third last year," she said. "You always want to improve upon that. When the two girls in front of you one has graduated and one is redshirting, it kind of looks realistic."

Prior to Sunday, Illinois State's Aisha Praught had the fastest steeplechase time of the season in the country (9:51.30). Kipp blew that away. She also breezed past her old personal record (9:56.37).

"It's always a little difficult at the beginning of the season to figure out what kind of shape you're in until you race," she said. "It's always nice when it's a little better than you think."

For now, Kipp has reached elite status. In addition to having the top collegiate time of the year, her race on Sunday was the best American time of the year and it's the second-fastest time in the world (Jamaica's Korene Hinds ran 9:42.27).

"It sounds cool right now, but I like to keep it in perspective that there's still a lot of season left and people are going to start running faster," Kipp said. "I've got to keep training hard if I want to maintain that."

Kipp's time also hit the U.S. Olympic trials "A" standard, meaning she will compete in the trials in June. She hit the Olympic "B" standard, putting her close to the "A" standard.

"Very far, far out goal," she said of the Olympics. "Being competitive at the trials would be more of my goal."

The way she's going, Kipp ought to be competitive at the trials. She's already starting to make her way into select company at CU. The Buffs have a strong tradition with the steeplechase.

In addition to Coburn, who was the U.S. champion last year, the Buffs have featured former Olympian Jenny Barringer.

Coburn and Barringer dominate CU's list of top performances in the steeplechase, but Kipp's race Sunday was the 17th best in CU history (only Barringer and Coburn have been faster).

Kipp said she has learned a lot from Coburn.

"CU is kind of a steeple dynasty," she said. "I have good coaches. Maybe that's more where I've learned it from."

Looking ahead, Kipp has the Pac-12 championships, NCAA regionals and NCAA nationals. Then, it's off to the Olympic trials.

"Hopefully I'll keep on training and peak at the right time and see what happens," she said.

Notable

Jason Burstyn finished 26th at the Pac-12 men's golf championships on Sunday. His four-day total of 292 was the third-best by a CU golfer in a conference championship tournament. The team finished eighth. ... CU's women's golf team was sixth at the Pac-12 tourney. The Buffs, however, were only seven shots behind the winner, California. Each of the top six teams were ranked in the top 17 nationally, including the No. 11 Buffs.