

CU cross country

## CU harriers take aim at nationals

### Bufs out to qualify for NCAA championships at today's regional

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Winning is always nice. But for the Colorado cross country team, being just good enough is all that matters today.

The Buffaloes will compete in the Mountain Region Championship in Provo, Utah. With the NCAA championships just nine days away, the Buffs aren't too concerned with winning.

"This is more of a qualifying round than it is a championship," long-time Buffs coach Mark Wetmore said. "There is a trophy and there is a first-place runner, but most people dial their training way back for (this meet) and then go back to work and what we call 'train through' the regionals."

CU does need to run well today. The top two teams in the men's and women's races automatically qualify for nationals. The third and fourth place teams are in great position for an at-large bid.

"You can play it too carefully, end up fifth and not get through," Wetmore said. "Or, you can run really hard and be tired next week. So, it can be tricky."

The Buffs probably don't have much to worry about, however.

The women are the third-ranked team in the country, and there's only one other top-30 team at the regionals -- No. 19 New Mexico. The men are ranked fourth nationally, just behind host BYU (No. 3). No. 12 Northern Arizona is the only other top-30 team in the field.

The last time CU's men or women failed to finish in the top four at regionals was in 1991, when both were fifth. Since then, the men haven't finished out of the top two and have taken 15 regional titles. The women have seven regional titles since 1991.

Sophomore Shalaya Kipp said the Buffs can "take this one easy" to an extent, but added, "It would be nice just to go and automatically have it done."

Kipp said the Buffs need to race smart, and Wetmore said it'll be important for his runners to have good "field awareness" - meaning they need to be well aware of where they stand among the other top teams during the race.

That's where competitiveness could take over, senior Richard Medina said.

"If there's a BYU guy in front of me, that competitive part of me is going to kick in," he said. "We don't want to go into a race aiming for No. 2. If there's a guy in (BYU's) blue and white in front of me, I'm going to try to get him in the last 100 meters."

Last week, the Buffs swept the Pac-12 Conference team titles -- the 13th time in school history both teams have won conference.

Barring a last-minute injury or illness, the Buffs will run their top seven finishers from the Pac-12 Championships. For the men, that group is Medina, Andrew Wacker, Joseph Bosshard, Christian Thompson, Ammar Moussa, Martin Medina and Blake Theroux. For the women, the lineup will include Kipp, Emma Coburn, Lara Darco, Rachel Baptista, Katie Cumming, Camille Logan and Rachel Viger.

Both squads have the ability to take the regional titles once again, but in the end, as long as they secure plane tickets to

Terre Haute, Ind., for the Nov. 21, nationals, Wetmore will be pleased.

"We can't jog it and we can't treat it cavalierly, but we would like to be very businesslike about it," he said. "The goal is plane tickets (to nationals)."

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