

Cross country: CU Buffs' Mark Wetmore rebuilding

By Ryan Thorburn *Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera*

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Only one Division I cross country program has won all four NCAA titles -- men's and women's individual and team national championships -- with the same head coach.

Colorado.

Mark Wetmore, entering his 16th season as head coach, has worked with his share of All-Americans and distinguished CU teams over the years.

Sweeping the inaugural Pac-12 championships last October was one of Wetmore's finest moments.

"I've been doing this a long time and there are a lot of highlights, but I have to say that that result 10 months ago was pretty high among them," Wetmore said. "We've won conference championships before, but we went in as underdogs against formidable opponents.

"And so the combination of the debut of the Pac-12 cross country meet, the first Pac-12 championship in any sport, that we were underdogs, and that we pretty much hit on all cylinders, added up to be a pretty good day. It was fun."

Having just returned to Boulder from the Olympics in London, where current Buffs Emma Coburn and Shalaya Kipp competed in the steeplechase and former CU star Jenny Simpson in the 1,500 meters, Wetmore will try to prepare for an encore.

Defending the conference crowns and being in the mix for an NCAA title this fall will not be easy. Both the men's and women's teams lost three scorers from last season's banner run.

"So we have some rebuilding to do," Wetmore said.

Joe Bosshard, the headliner on the men's side, may not be able to contribute after having hip surgery in May to repair a torn labrum.

"His rehab is going well, but it will be a bit of a miracle if he's at a level that will make it sensible to use him this fall," Wetmore said.

Kipp will be taking some time off to recover from a grueling year that included an NCAA championship in the steeplechase and her first appearance in the Olympics.

"So Shalaya will disappear for a while and then go back into training," Wetmore said. "Coach (Heather) Burroughs and I will take a look at her around mid-season and see if she is ready to go."

However, the cross country cupboard at CU is never bare. Among the next generation of potential running stars are sophomores Ammar Moussa and Rachel Baptista.

The Buffs will host a time trial (Sept. 1) and the Rocky Mountain Shootout (Sept. 29) at the Buffalo Ranch Course on CU's south campus. The 2012 Pac-12 championships are on Oct. 27 in Santa Clarita, Calif., and the NCAA championships will be contested on Nov. 17 in Louisville, Ky.

"While we are diminished, no one in the Pac-12 returns a monster team," Wetmore said. "It's always an extremely competitive conference. I can't think of a team that returns all five of its starters or a good percentage. But in our sport, it's possible to recruit a completely different team in one year."

Arizona, Oregon, Stanford and Washington are expected to be the primary challengers to end the Buffs' reign.

CU, which won 12 men's and 11 women's Big 12 championships with Wetmore coaching, will host the 2013 Pac-12 championships in Boulder.

"We are very excited about hosting the championship, but we are excited about 2012 as well," Wetmore said.

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Colorado to host 2013 Pac-12 cross country championships

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BOULDER — During Colorado media day activities Saturday that involved several sports, Buffs coach Mark Wetmore confirmed that CU will host the 2013 Pac-12 Conference men's and women's cross country championships.

The Buffs men's and women's teams will defend their 2011 Pac-12 titles Oct. 27 in Santa Clarita, Calif. Both teams were considered underdogs, if not longshots, to win the first Pac-12 championships awarded in any sport last October in suburban Phoenix.

"Well, I've been doing this a long time," Wetmore said, "and there's been a lot of highlights. But I'd have to say, that result 10 months ago was pretty high among them."

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