

## CU steeplechasers ready for their Olympic moment

By John Meyer *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*  
Posted:

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LONDON — Of the nine women on the U.S. Olympic track team who competed in college this year, two run for Colorado and both run the same event.

How unusual is that?

"I've never seen it before," said CU head coach Mark Wetmore.

But it will happen Saturday when steeplechasers Emma Coburn of Crested Butte and Shalaya Kipp of Salt Lake City race in qualifying rounds at the Olympics. Out of three heats involving 44 runners, 15 advance to Monday's final.

Coburn won the NCAA title in 2011 and made the U.S. world championships team. With her red-shirting this year, Kipp kept the NCAA title in CU hands. Even for a school that has come to be known as Steeplechase U, what they've done the past two years is remarkable.

"A confluence of luck, talent and environment that ... adds up to Olympic level talent," Wetmore said. "Two people of that talent at the same school at the same time is pretty rare."

The steeplechase, which involves running 3,000 meters and leaping barriers, is rarely run at the high school level. Wetmore and associate head coach Heather Burroughs look at freshman distance runners for physical and personality qualities that could make them good steeplers.

"Some are very intrigued with it," Burroughs said. "Some are terrified of it and have absolutely no interest in it."

Coburn is one of the rare ones who ran some steeplechase in high school. Kipp knew nothing about it when she came to Boulder.

"I still thought it was a horse event," Kipp said.

Coburn and Kipp disagree on which one benefits most from their unique relationship.

"It probably helps me the most, because I get to learn so much from Emma," Kipp said. "She has the international experience. She's always telling me little things I need to know. Then in practice, I get to follow her off water jumps; she has beautiful form."

Coburn begs to differ.

"I would say the opposite, I probably benefit more," Coburn said. "Although I do have more steeplechase experience and more international experience from last summer, Shalaya is just a very talented, strong runner. I think we push each other pretty well."

Coburn won the past two U.S. steeplechase championships and finished 13th at last year's world championships. Kipp is making her first appearance in a major international event.

"Historically, most people have a difficult time in their first world or Olympic championships," Burroughs said. "It's a whole new level of stress and attention, often 12 or 15 hours time difference. Across event areas, professionals or collegians, it's difficult to run your best at that meet."

Burroughs isn't the only one trying to temper expectations for two young runners who appear to have bright futures. For them, London marks an apprenticeship into the world of world-class track. They're not even allowing themselves to dream about medals.

"I'm trying to stay focused on what I know I can achieve," Coburn said. "I think if either of us were to dream beyond what is attainable, it wouldn't work out. I think we'd both fail."

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## Rockford's Dathan Ritzenhein on Olympic 10,000 meters: 'Confidence couldn't be any better'

Published: Saturday, August 04, 2012, 9:00 AM Updated: Saturday, August 04, 2012, 1:56 PM



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By

GRAND RAPIDS, MI - Rockford's Dathan Ritzenhein may face long odds in the Olympic 10,000 meters today - at least based on time comparisons - but don't tell him that.

"I've been to the Olympics before, and I'm not going to settle for a good race," **he told Runner's World earlier this week.** "I want to run a great race. I want to run absolutely the best race I can."

The 29-year-old, a 2001 Rockford High School graduate, competes in his third Olympics at 4:15 (EDT) today, and, while he's not favored, he is the healthiest he has been in a year.

Ritzenhein, following a series of foot and leg injuries and frustrating races - he was fourth and one spot from the U.S. team in the marathon trials - **made the Olympics in late June at the U.S. Olympic Trials in Eugene, Ore.** He ran 27:36.09 to finish third.

His personal best time in the race is 27:22.28, reached in 2009 in Berlin, Germany, and that makes him a long shot. **The time is 12th among the entries**, far in back of the record time of 26:17.53 by Kenenisa Bekele of Ethiopia.



AP Photo

Dathan Ritzenhein reacts after he finished third in the 10,000 meters in the U.S. Olympic Trials in June to qualify for his third Olympics.

Nike teammate and training partner Galen Rupp, who won the trials in 27:25.33 (his best of the season) has run 26:48, and Matt Tegenkamp, second at the trials in 27:33.94 (also his season best), has turned in a 27:28.22.

Taking into account top 10,000 times for this season only, Ritzenhein slides to 18th in the field of 29.

**But others believe Ritzenhein might surprise.** Ritzenhein certainly believes he has more to give.

"I've been healthy for a year," he said in Runner's World. "It's the first time I've had that kind of healthy training in the last 10 years. My workouts have been better even than in my best track season. I just feel ready, but also feel that I'm still getting fitter. My confidence couldn't be any better."

This will be Ritzenhein's third Olympic appearance. In 2004, he qualified for the 10,000 but had to drop out of the race in Athens with a football injury. Four years later, in Beijing, he ran the marathon and was the top American finisher in ninth in 2:11:59.

**Email Pete**, follow him on **Twitter** and become friends on **Facebook**.

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## Monument's Simpson prepares for Olympic medal in 1,500

[DAVID RAMSEY](#)

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LONDON – Monument resident Jenny Simpson has traveled to England with a laser-like focus. She's here to prepare to compete in the Olympic 1,500 meters.

And that's about it.

Simpson eats breakfast at the Olympic Village, takes a bus to a vigorous daily workout and then returns to her room, where she spends most of the rest of her day in concentrated rest. She sees her husband, Jason, every two or three days.

She will need to be rested this week. She will compete Monday and Wednesday in qualifying rounds for Friday's final. These will be three of the biggest races of her life.

"You can really prepare your mind for something special," she said Friday in a rare break from preparation. "This is much more mental than physical, and it's what has worked for me in the past, sticking to the same routine, having a few essential things to do everyday."

Simpson has told her husband they will someday return to London to see the sights.

"Now, that I'm here," she said, "I feel that the worst and most difficult part is over and now I have a chance to see how I size up against the world."

Juli Benson serves as Simpson's advisor/coach. She's also head coach of Air Force Academy's cross country team. Benson has been impressed with Simpson's ability to totally concentrate on her goal for London.

"Her training has been fabulous," Benson said. "It's given her a lot of confidence, to be honest. This is where she shines. She's learned that being bored and having a lot of idle time is fine."

Simpson competed for the University of Colorado, running 3.59.90 in the 1,500 as a senior for the Buffs in 2009. In 2008, she finished 9th in the Olympic Steeplechase at Beijing.

She won the 1,500 at the World Championships in South Korea in September, making her one of the favorites for an Olympic medal. Her victory at the World Championships, she said, eased her burdens.

"I feel I've already reached the top," Simpson said in June. "...And that gives me a little bit of freedom."

Her victory in South Korea did nothing to drain her immense competitiveness. She spends her days in London preparing for victory.

And that's about all she does.

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## Kara Goucher, mom, ready for Olympic Marathon



by Pat Dooris, KGW Staff

kgw.com

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Recommend 8

PORTLAND, Ore. -- Kara Goucher looks focused and determined in the TV footage from the 2012 Olympic Trials qualifying marathon in Houston. It's the Goucher the world knows: fast and tough over 26.2 miles. **PHOTOS: Goucher qualities for Olympics**

But there is another side few get to see.

It's on display here, in her West Portland home, as she wakes her two year old Colt from a nap.

"Hey sweetie," she says, picking the child from his crib. It's three o'clock in the afternoon in early July.

"It's okay, oh did you have a good nap? Are you still sleepy?" Goucher whispers in his ear as she holds him close on her chest.

It's a soothing beginning. But no one likes the end of nap time. Colt begins to cry. "Oh honey," she says, rubbing the child's back and kissing his forehead. It's okay," she whispers.

Kara Goucher is one of the fastest female marathon runners in America, an Olympian, and the owner of a bronze medal in world competition. But to a fussy little one, none of that matters.

"He's out of sorts," she says, walking downstairs still carrying the crying Colt. "You're out of sorts! That's okay," she says to him.

But this is a big day at the Goucher home and Kara hopes the package that arrived earlier in the mail will distract young Colt. Her husband, Adam, also a runner and a member of the 2000 Olympic team, carries the big box into the living room.

"Yeah? Can you help me open that?" Kara says to Colt. "Does that look like fun? Can you help me?" she says. As Adam slices through the packing tape with a knife, he looks up and says "this is pretty cool huh?"

It is indeed. Kara and Adam Goucher are opening the package carrying her uniforms and gear for the 2012 Olympics in London.

"And yah it's just really, I mean just you know getting something that says 'USA', it's just so, it's so exciting!" she says.

Colt has quit crying and looks interested too as tops and warm ups and headphones come out of the box.

"Oh! What is it? You're going to help me now?" Kara says. "I think I see my racing uniform Colt. I think this is it! I've seen it on the news, now I've got it myself," she says, holding up a red running top.

This will be Goucher's first Olympics as a marathoner, and also her first as a mom. She barely stopped running around the birth.



"I remember that my mom was here and I nursed him and we sat for a minute and I waited until the clock turned 10:15 and he was officially a week old and I told my mom I'm gonna go for a walk. And I knew I was lying," she says.

She was running.

And she's rarely stopped since. Leading up to the Olympics, Goucher ran up to 120 miles a week both at Nike and on the streets of Portland. She's work out twice a day, in the morning with a coach and in the afternoon on her own, from her home.

"Sometimes I'll run down to the grocery store, the QFC. So I'll run down on Skyline for awhile then I'll run down Cornell, then down Miller to the grocery store and Adam will pick me up there and we'll grocery shop. And I'm always like, bring a sweatshirt it's cold in there. Then I get down there and I'm sweaty and I'm like, do you have my sweatshirt? And he forgot it! But I love running from my house," she says.

Kara Goucher started running as a 7th grader. The sport gave her confidence, focus and an inner peace unlike anything she'd ever felt.

### **PHOTOS: Kara Goucher through the years**

Now, at 34 years old, she guards that time. "So running's really my time," Goucher says. "And people always ask me if I think about Colt while I train or when I race and I really don't that much," she says.

Although there was a moment of mommy guilt at the qualifying race for the Olympic marathon team when her son colt "melted down" as Goucher prepared to run.

"As we came to the starting line, he doesn't like yelling, and there was all this yelling as we came to the starting line and he was just bawling! And my sister's holding him over the rail and he's just like baaaahhhh," she recalls. "And Shalane (Flanagan) said 'I can't look at your son, it's gonna make me cry.' And I just blocked it out. You know I lifted up my sunglasses and said 'it's mommy' and he just kept crying," Goucher says. She thought only of running for the next 2 hours but with a mile to go and safely in 3rd place, which locked in her spot for the Olympic team, her mother's worry returned. "I was like, I can't wait to go see him and of course by the time I finished he was perfectly happy," she says.

Now, with the marathon race just days away, the Goucher family is gathered in London hoping for Gold.



There are faster runners in the world, the Kenyans for example. But Goucher believes the Olympic course will slow everyone.

"It favors someone more like me who hasn't run 2:19. You know? I haven't run some of these times that the Kenyans especially did this past year or Shalane. We haven't run these times. But this is a little bit of an equalizer, this course because no one's gonna be able to go out and just hit 5:20 from the beginning," she says. Goucher believes she has a good chance.

But she thought that in Beijing too and came away devastated, finishing out of the medals in the 5,000 meters and 10,000 meters races.

"Four years ago, I put so much pressure on myself to medal. I had medaled the year before at world champs and I felt if I didn't come home with a medal it was a failure," Goucher says. "Um (pause) living, you know, not medaling and living through that experience and realizing I was still the same person and especially having a son and just being a little older, I have a totally different outlook on this Olympics," Goucher says.

It's a lesson seasoned by her journey.

"I'm just determined that I'm going to have a great race and I'm hoping it's good enough. But if it's not, I'm not gonna... all I can do is what I can do," Kara Goucher says.

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# StarTribune

## Goucher ready to run for 'something big'

August 3, 2012 - 11:48 PM

LONDON -- Sunday morning in London -- which means very early Sunday morning in her home state of Minnesota -- Kara Goucher will take a scenic running tour through London.

She may not be too interested in the view. Goucher, from Duluth, will be competing in the Olympic women's marathon, four years after competing in the 5,000 and 10,000 meters in Beijing.

She finished ninth in the former and 10th in the latter. Goucher isn't predicting a medal in London, but she sounded optimistic when interviewed in her current home city of Portland, Ore., this summer.

"I think something big could happen," she said.

The race will begin and end in the scenic London Mall and take her past such landmarks as Buckingham Palace, Admiralty Arch, Birdcage Walk, St Paul's Cathedral, Leadenhall, Tower Hill and the Houses of Parliament.

Goucher said every marathon offers slightly different terrain, and she wondered aloud about running on cobblestones in the biggest race of her life. She has run the course in preparation, and hopes to erase her disappointment over her 10,000-meter performance in Beijing.

"People questioned me doubling [running two events] in Beijing, and I'm so glad I did it," she said. "Otherwise the Olympic experience would have been so bitter and instead I had fun. I was really disappointed with one run. The 10,000 was my chance at a medal and it didn't happen."

Goucher trains with Shalane Flanagan, who won the U.S. Olympic trials as Goucher finished third.

"I made a decision to see how good I can be in the marathon," Goucher said. "I had to find out if this is what I should be doing. I didn't want to have to wonder."

JIM SOUHAN



Kara Goucher

Tim Labarge, Tim Labarge

### WOMEN'S MARATHON

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## **Duluth News Tribune**

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### **Women's Olympic marathon: Duluth native Goucher is in it to win it**

Kara Goucher doesn't believe her running career is reaching a peak in Sunday's Summer Olympics women's marathon.

By: **Kevin Pates**, Duluth News Tribune

Kara Goucher doesn't believe her running career is reaching a peak in Sunday's Summer Olympics women's marathon.

At age 34, she thinks the best is yet to come.

Her family — biased, of course — feels the same, especially after a telling past 10 months.

"She's come back from a significant (hip) injury, she changed coaches, she started a whole new training program and with all of that, she made the Olympic team. That was very impressive, a very big accomplishment," said Adam Goucher, Kara's husband and a 2000 U.S. Olympic track runner. "From where she was, to where she is now, is night and day. She still has the speed to set personal bests at 5,000 and 10,000 meters, but her best chance for success is in the marathon. She feels she's a marathoner now."

The 5 a.m. race, to be carried live by NBC TV (Northland's NewsCenter, KBJR6) from London, will be Goucher's sixth marathon, all since 2008, following her first Olympic appearance, in Beijing on the track. There are 118 women entered from 66 countries.

Only three American women have ever run a faster marathon than the 1996 Duluth East graduate, who has a best of 2 hours, 24 minutes and 52 seconds. Goucher is only the second woman raised in Northeastern Minnesota to qualify for two Summer Olympics, following Chisholm swimmer Anne Govednik in 1932 and 1936.

#### **THE DRIVE AND FIRE**

Goucher's mom, Patty Wheeler, and Kara's older sister, Kelly Grgas-Wheeler, both from Duluth, will be on the 26.2-mile course. Their anticipation is more tuned to confidence rather than concern four years after Beijing, when Goucher was new to the Olympics and not particularly comfortable being on the world's brightest-lit stage.

"She's in the best spot she she's ever been — the fittest, the best shape, the most prepared. She's more confident and knows what to expect," Patty Wheeler said recently. "She still has a lot of dreams. She still has the drive and fire to achieve."

A good dose of competitive adrenaline was injected June 16 in Duluth when Goucher ran her first race at home in 16 years, since her senior year in high school. In the U.S. Half Marathon Championships, she not only won, but set a women's course record, and was particularly emotional in the closing miles. A News Tribune photo of her at the finish line, taken by Clint Austin, shows raw exhilaration and is destined for a number of newspaper awards for 2012.

Goucher, who lives in Portland, Ore., achieved a goal here, a course record, which only heightened her London outlook. She's on the American team after placing third in the Olympic Trials on Jan. 14 in Houston.

"Kara said she felt like a tourist at the Olympics in 2008, she was just enamored with it all," said Grgas-Wheeler. "This time it's all business, no messing around. She's matured, there's better balance to her life, she's refined things.

"She was stunned by the crowds that came out to watch the (Duluth) half marathon and cheer for her. It was the most perfect experience there could be. Her last race before London was perfect."

Kara and Adam Goucher and son Colt, nearly 2, arrived in the Netherlands on July 23 and stayed out of the limelight, not getting to London until Thursday.

In February, Oregon Track Club coach Jerry Schumacher and his two marathon athletes, Goucher and Shalane Flanagan, traveled to London and ran the looped course during three workouts over two days, with Goucher and Flanagan taking turns leading.

#### **'IN LOVE WITH THE MARATHON LIFESTYLE'**

When Goucher set her mind on moving from the track to the roads, specifically the marathon, she also chose to leave coach Alberto Salazar after seven years last October. It was a difficult decision, but one she said she had to make to get a new start. She didn't need to move to join Schumacher's group, based in Portland.

Training with three-time U.S. Olympian Flanagan has been a major benefit.

"Kara could definitely run her fastest time in London, so could Shalane. Since the (U.S.) trials, I believe they've taken great steps," said Schumacher. "The quality and consistency of their training has been remarkable, and gives me a great deal of confidence in both.

"All you can do is give it your absolute best and fight and scrap, and finish in front of as many runners as you can. Everyone wants to finish in the top three and that's where the dreaming comes in. Everyone dreams of being on the podium."

Goucher's younger sister, Kendall Schoolmeester, followed Kara as a star runner at Duluth East and the University of Colorado in Boulder, and is now the mother of two girls, ages 4 and 1. Kendall, living about 35 miles from her sister in Portland, has witnessed Kara embrace the marathon.

Schoolmeester says Goucher has never been happier with her running.

"Kara is in love with the marathon lifestyle. She knows racing 26.2 miles isn't for everyone, and that's what she likes," said Schoolmeester. "She made the Olympic team on minimal training and her confidence skyrocketed, and there's been a major transformation in just the last few months.

"She's been blessed to have one of the best training partners in the world, and they've had some phenomenal workouts. They wouldn't be training as hard as they are if they didn't think they have a chance. Kara believes if she can run with Shalane she can run with anyone."

Goucher's family believes this is just a start, and she says staying the marathon game could lead to pursuing another Olympic berth in 2016 when the Summer Games are held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

"I've wanted to be a marathoner for a while and I've made a commitment for at least the next two or three years to see where it takes me," said Goucher. "I'm committed to the training where you have to disappear for a while, out of the spotlight, and not wear a racing uniform and not get a pat on the back, when you're just dedicated to running miles.

"I'm very confident I'm going to run a (personal record) in London, but I think I'm still improving. I think I'll be even better in the next marathon."

Following the Summer Games, the three-member American women's team already has made a commitment to race in the 2013 Boston Marathon on April 15.

Goucher's personal record ranks eighth all-time among U.S. women. Deena Kastor holds three of the top four times, including an American-best 2:19:36 set in 2006 in London. Former gold medalist Joan Benoit has three times in the top seven, while 2012 Olympian Desiree Davila ranks No. 5 at 2:22:38.

There is precedent for women's marathon success after age 34.

- New Zealand's Lorraine Moller earned a bronze medal in the 1992 Summer Olympics at age 37.
- Romania's Constantina Tomescu claimed a gold medal in the 2008 Summer Olympic at age 38.
- Colleen De Reuck won the 2004 U.S. Olympic Trials, just 10 days shy of her 40th birthday.

The Olympic men's marathon is Aug. 12.

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