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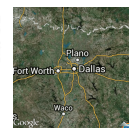
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Fetterman: Renee Metivier Baillie couldn't wait to get on the road again after winning three state titles



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DEBBIE FETTERMAN

Special Contributor

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Renee Metivier Baillie, a three-time state champion from Highland Village, will make her 2013 road race debut at Saturday's USA Half Marathon Championships in Minnesota. Baillie, who lives in Bend, Ore., had a breakout year in 2012 following 2011 Achilles surgery.

Dallas' Dawn Grunnagle and Jacob Phillips also will be racing in the Half Marathon Championships, which are being held in conjunction with Grandma's Marathon in Duluth, Minn.

Following her surgery, Baillie has transformed herself from a track standout into one of the nation's most promising road racers. She is coached by her husband Austin Baillie.

She won the 2012 USA Track & Field 20K championships over Labor Day weekend. Four weeks later, she placed eighth at the Chicago Marathon in 2 hours, 27 minutes, 17 seconds. She was the top American finisher and posted the fifth-fastest debut marathon in U.S. history.

In January, she cancelled plans to race the Chevron Houston Marathon because she needed more recovery time following the Chicago race. She then planned to race the April 21 London Marathon. In the midst of high-mileage training, she got sick and lost several weeks of training. She pulled out, saying at the time, "I have some lofty goals and need to be 100 percent to do them."

Her peak race this summer will be the July 4 Peachtree 10K in Atlanta, which serves as the U.S. 10K Championships. Saturday's half marathon will serve as a tuneup. She can barely contain her excitement to be racing again.

After a stellar high school career under Flower Mound Marcus coach Steve Telaneus, Baillie excelled in college. She ran strong two years at Georgia Tech then transferred to Colorado for its nationally acclaimed distance running program. The 11-time All-America culminated her college career with a national indoor track title in March 2005.

She then turned pro and experienced many ups and down. The worst was the Achilles tendon injury that plagued her for seven years. After fruitless tests and therapies, she had corrective surgery in Sweden in June 2011.

"It was starting to decrease my happiness quotient," she said of her Achilles pain. "I still had the drive, and all this potential that hadn't been realized. I didn't want to give up. It was a last-ditch effort."

She has come back strong, something she proudly and prominently displays with a vibrant Phoenix tattoo on her right hip.

"There was a chance I could have never run again," she said. "I've risen stronger. The tattoo is on that leg, proud and fierce and beautiful. It symbolizes me in a nutshell: my struggles and my resurgence."

End of an era: Dadfest officials have called it quits following Saturday's 20th running. The annual 5K honored fathers and raised awareness for prostate cancer.

Nonprofit run group seeks new leader: Lea Velez, executive director of running non-profit Back on My Feet Dallas-Fort Worth, is leaving to become a professor at UT-Arlington's School of Social Work. Back on My Feet, which uses running to empower those experiencing homelessness to transform their lives, is seeking qualified candidates. For information, contact hr@backonmyfeet.org.

Briefly: Dallas' Orville Rogers, 95, broke the 400-meter age group world record for men 95-99, at Saturday's Texas Masters Outdoor Track and Field Championships at Coppell High School. His time of 2 minutes, 17.45 seconds smashed the old record of 2:38.64. ... Luke's Locker's marathon training programs for the Dec. 8 Metro PCS Dallas Marathon kick off Saturday. For information, visit lukeslocker.com, then click training.

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Article updated: 6/20/2013 4:54 PM

Can Irwin tame Chicago field one more time?

By Len Ziehm

No golfer ever has had the success that Hale Irwin has enjoyed on Chicago courses.

Not Fred Couples, not Mark O'Meara, not Bernhard Langer, not Tom Lehman, not even Illinois Golf Hall of Famer Jay Haas or Nick Price — the last winner of back-to-back Western Opens at Cog Hill back in the early 1990s.

All of them will be trying to put a damper on Irwin's extraordinary four decades of success here starting Friday when the 54-hole Encompass Championship tees off at North Shore Country Club in Glenview.

Irwin won at Butler National (1975 Western Open), Medinah (1990 U.S. Open), Stonebridge (1997 Ameritech Senior Open) and Kemper Lakes (1998 and 1990 Ameritech Senior Opens). Like the three ASOs, the Encompass is part of the Champions Tour and the \$1.8 million event is the circuit's first in the Chicago area since 2002.

The 50-and-over circuit's return was due in part to campaigning by a group of players that included Irwin, who met with North Shore's members as part of the negotiation process.

"I've always loved Chicago. It's a great sports town, and we've had great success here with golf tournaments," said Irwin. "Coming to North Shore, all the players are very impressed with the golf course. ... This tournament is going to rank in the top five or 10 right now and, with a successful week of golf, it's going to rise very rapidly to the top of the heap, one of the best we have out here."

Irwin's no kid anymore, not even by Champions Tour standards. Once the circuit's dominant player, he's 68 now with a family that includes three grandchildren. He belongs to clubs in St. Louis and Arizona but uses them basically for practicing. Other than his tour appearances, Irwin's golf is not the high priority it once was.

"I do spend a little time on keeping my game relatively current," he said. "I don't let it go completely."

But, the likely winners of this first Encompass Championship in Chicago (it made its debut last year in Tampa, Fla.), would seem to be David Frost or Langer, the circuit's only two-time champions this season. John Cook, third behind those two on the circuit's Charles Schwab Cup point standings, should also contend.

Couples and Kenny Perry, who split time between the Champions and PGA tours, are also in the mix along with Jeff Sluman, who has long called Burr Ridge his home base.

All 81 starters will be paired with an amateur for two days of team competition — a tournament within the tournament. There'll also be a celebrity component, though one of the originally announced celebs — Scottie Pippen — withdrew on Thursday.

Pro-celebrity pairings, which were announced Thursday, have Larry Mize with Bears' coach Marc Trestman, Couples with Toni Kukoc, Sluman with Brian Urlacher, Craig Stadler with Joe Theismann, Chien Soon Lu with Jay Hilgenberg, D.A. Weibring with Robbie Gould, Mark Brooks with Jack O'Callahan, Bobby Wadkins with wounded

warrior Chad Watson, and Don Pooley with Pat Foley.

Couples thought he might be paired with Michael Jordan.

"He's out of town," said Couples. "I asked Bo Jackson, but he's got his charity event on Saturday. Michael gave me a couple suggestions and Jeff Sluman put me in touch with Toni, so I'm excited. I've never met him, but I've seen him play basketball."

Kukoc took up golf as his NBA career was winding down and will be — at 6-foot-11 and a left-handed golfer — a striking figure on the course. He also can play. Last year he was the club champion at Twin Orchard in Long Grove.

As far as the pro ranks go, the only notable late withdrawal was Fuzzy Zoeller and the only notable non-entry was Tom Watson. Otherwise the Encompass field is loaded with the sport's stars of the past. Play begins at 7:15 a.m. with the last group going off at 1:34 p.m.

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Running events take place all weekend in Duluth, Minn., and Des Moines, Iowa

By Sarah Kuta kuta@coloradodaily.com Colorado Daily

Posted:

ColoradoDaily.com

This weekend

USA Half-Marathon Championships : <http://bit.ly/14JlpPB>

USA Outdoor Track and Field Championships <http://bit.ly/178w2Aj>

For Boulder runner Tyler McCandless, this weekend will show just how deep the field is for American running.

With the USA Half-Marathon Championships in Duluth, Minn., and the USA Outdoor Track & Field Championships in Des Moines, Iowa, this weekend, the "who's who" of American runners are on display.

"If you accumulate a whole year's worth of data and look at results, that'll show the depth, but if you show the depth on one weekend with great half-marathon competition and great competition on the track, you can see America's come a long way since previous years," he said.

McCandless and other Boulder-based runners will join runners like Allyson Felix and Tyson Gay, made famous by the summer Olympics in London, this weekend.

University of Colorado alum Kara Goucher, who won the half-marathon title last year, headed to the track instead to run the 10,000-meter race. She finished in fifth in 32 minutes, 59.23 seconds on Thursday night.

CU's Shalaya Kipp finished 13th in the women's 3,000-meter steeplechase first round Thursday to qualify for Saturday's final. She finished in 10:7.75.

CU's Aric VanHalen and former Buff Billy Nelson will compete in the first round of the men's 3,000-meter steeplechase today. Dathan Ritzenhein competed in the 10,000-meter men's race and finished second in 28:49.66. Galen Rupp won in 28:47.32. Buffs assistant coach Casey Malone will compete today in discus throw finals.

CU alum and sprinter Jeremy Dodson, who now trains with the Boulder Track Club and lives in Broomfield, will run the 200-meter sprint, while fellow Buff alum and club teammate Laura Thweatt compete in the 5,000.

Dodson, who's faced legal troubles the last two years including pleading guilty to identity theft and stalking charges, said he's hoping for a top-three finish and a spot on the U.S. world championships team.

"I just use it as motivation," Dodson said of his legal troubles. "Everyone goes through it and this is mine."

Two weeks ago, Dodson said he fell during practice, injuring his wrist, neck and head. He said he still doesn't feel 100 percent after the fall, which is "frustrating."

Thweatt, a 2011 CU graduate, recently ran the Bolder Boulder for Team USA and said she'd like to finish top 10 in the 10,000-meter race at nationals.

"It's been a really great year for me," Thweatt said. "I've developed some strength that I haven't had in years past and I'm hoping to go out there and be in the mix."

McCandless and his training partner under coach Steve Jones, Deanna Ardrey, will both head to the half-marathon championships. CU alum Andy Wacker, among other Boulder competitors, will also race in Duluth.

Ardrey, 30, learned about a month ago she was anemic, but has been taking iron supplements and said feels almost back to normal.

"It's a really deep field, a very competitive field, so I hope to be right there and compete the best I can," she said.

Ardrey said she has her eyes on the USA Marathon Championships in the fall, where she hopes to have a breakthrough performance. In addition to training, Ardrey works full time while going to school at Metro State.

Her training partner McCandless said he's changed up his training a bit, focusing on quality of miles rather than quantity. He said he still averages about 100 miles a week, but eliminated extra core and weight training workouts.

Realistically, McCandless said he expects to finish around 10th place, given how deep the field is this year. McCandless is coming off a confidence boosting Bolder Boulder race after running for Team Colorado. He also finished the comprehensive exams required for his doctorate program in meteorology, which he's working on through Penn State University and the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR).

Unfortunately, there's no Folsom finish to give him a finishing push in Duluth, McCandless said, but he's confident he'll run well at the half-marathon championships.

"Assuming the weather is perfect, I am in shape to crush my PR, which is 1:04.59," McCandless said.

--Follow Sarah Kuta on Twitter: @SarahKuta.