

## Track and field: Former CU Buff Andy Wacker has successful pro debut

By Sarah Kuta Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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University of Colorado cross country and track coach Mark Wetmore said he preaches autonomy to his runners.

This fall, CU graduate student and newly initiated Boulder Running Club racer Andy Wacker internalized that message.

Wacker made his professional debut over the weekend, running an 8K at the 2012 USATF Cross Country Championships in Colorado Springs. He took first with a final time of 24 minutes, 41.40 seconds, beating his former CU teammate Matthew Tebo, who came in at 25:05.70.

On a whim the next day, Wacker decided to run the Boulder Half Marathon, which doubled as the USATF Colorado Half-Marathon Championship race, and won that, too.

All in a weekend's work.

Wacker raced for CU under Wetmore during his time as an undergraduate. Now, as a graduate student studying integrated physiology, he's kept Wetmore on as his coach and still works out with the men's cross country team.

Wacker and Wetmore decided the 130-miles per week Wacker ran as a collegiate racer was too much for his busy lifestyle. Worried that he might burn out, they decided that he should run 105 miles each week -- quality, not quantity, Wacker said.

"He has matured in the way that he's a little more patient," Wetmore said. "He never lacked the will to work hard, but sometimes it was hard to hold him back. He's a little more patient with his preparation than in the last few years."

It seems their plan -- and Wacker's hard work -- paid off. By winning the USATF Cross Country Championships on Saturday, Wacker qualified to represent the Boulder Running Club in December at the USATF National Club Cross Country Championships in Lexington, Ky.

His 90-year-old grandmother Annemarie Pollard, who helped to raise Wacker as a child in Pinehurst, N.C., commented on a Facebook photo of Wacker taken at the end of the Boulder Half Marathon.

"So proud of you!" she wrote. "Hair is getting better too. Love, Oma."

Wacker has always been close to his grandmother. His mom, Karin Wacker, said Andy would head to his grandmother's house after school as a kid. She would cook him dinner, and they would spend time together until his mom finished work. His parents are divorced, and Wacker spent most of his childhood with his mother.

He took up running in seventh grade so he could stay after school with his older brother, Ben, who played soccer. Karin Wacker, a physical therapist who still lives in North Carolina, said that although the number of miles Andy Wacker runs each week is a bit "crazy" -- and though she wishes he lived closer to home -- she can tell he feels at home in Boulder and at CU.

"He has a built-in family," Karin Wacker said. "I can see why he loves it."

At CU, Wacker earned Academic All-Big 12 honors in 2009, 2010 and 2011, and was a four-time All-Big 12 performer.

As part of the CU team, the All-American runner had a set schedule full of classes, training, studying, tutoring and team meets.

Now he's still busy, but he's mainly training on his own. He decides how far to run each week to meet his own personal goals.

"Coming into this year, it was a lot more making my own decisions for the first time as far as what races I want to do, what my goals are and how I was going to reach those goals in the meantime," Wacker said. "So I'm really being autonomous for the first time."

Follow Sarah on Twitter: @SarahKuta.

## Notebook: ILB Jones 'only going to get better,' McCarthy predicts

Written by Weston Hodkiewicz, Green Bay Press-Gazette  
Oct. 24

greenbaypressgazette.com



Zoom

St. Louis Rams running back Steven Jackson, bottom, falls into the end zone for a 6-yard touchdown past Green Bay Packers linebacker Brad Jones (59) during the fourth quarter of an NFL football game Sunday, Oct. 21, 2012, in St. Louis. / Seth Perlman/AP

In the eyes of his coaches, Brad Jones passed his first test at inside linebacker on Sunday.

Following D.J. Smith's season-ending knee injury against Houston two weeks ago, the fourth-year linebacker received his first career start playing inside during Sunday's 30-20 win over St. Louis.

*St. Louis Rams running back Steven Jackson, bottom, falls into the end zone for a 6-yard touchdown past Green Bay Packers linebacker Brad Jones (59) during the fourth quarter of an NFL football game Sunday, Oct. 21, 2012, in St. Louis.*

Jones, who made the conversion from outside to inside linebacker this offseason, assumed Smith's spot playing in all the team's sub-packages, wearing the communication helmet from which plays were called into the huddle.

The 6-foot-3, 242-pound linebacker was one of only five defensive players to play all 60 snaps, but wasn't as productive as Smith with only two tackles against the Rams



However, both Packers coach Mike McCarthy and defensive coordinator Dom Capers said they were pleased with how Jones played in only his second start in two years.

"For Brad, being the first time in that role, he's only going to get better," McCarthy said. "There's a couple things technique-wise that he'll continue to improve on, but I was very pleased with the way our inside backers played."

The Packers' troubles at inside linebacker began during the first preseason game against San Diego on Aug. 9 when starter Desmond Bishop went down with a season-ending hamstring injury.

Smith, who started three games inside last year, took over from there and was an adequate replacement through the first six games before getting hit by Texans offensive tackle Duane Brown near the end of play, which caused his knee to buckle.

Insert Jones, who was also credited with one hit, one quarterback pressure and one 18-yard reception on two targets, according to Pro Football Focus.

The Packers still have plenty of options inside with veteran Robert Francois, second-year pro Jamari Lattimore and rookie Terrell Manning, but by all indications the job is going to stay with Jones, who supplanted Smith immediately after the injury against Houston.

"Bishop was our starting backer in our dime package and then we went to D.J. and now Brad had to handle that, so

that was a new role for Brad,” Capers said. “You’re always interested in how a guy does in that role for the first time because Brad had a lot on his plate in the game yesterday.

“He did a good job. He did a good job with the communication and he played every down, so he did a pretty nice job.”

#### Secondary scenarios

Although the Packers will be without defensive back Charles Woodson for the next six weeks with a broken collarbone, McCarthy sounded optimistic about the outlook for cornerback Sam Shields.

Shields, who had cemented his role as the team’s No. 2 cornerback over the past month, sat out of Sunday’s win against St. Louis after suffering a shin/ankle injury against the Texans two weeks ago.

Rookie Casey Hayward played well in his place on Sunday, but the Packers are still hopeful Shields could be a factor this week prior to Sunday’s home game against Jacksonville.

“Probably Thursday will be the biggest day to answer that,” McCarthy said. “I think if Sam could go on Friday, I’d be comfortable playing him on one day of preparation. We’ll see how he makes it through the week.”

The Packers were also happy with what they saw from second-year cornerback Davon House, who played 23 snaps in his regular-season debut after being sidelined with a shoulder injury for the past two months.

House helped breakup a pass intended for Brandon Gibson early in the game on fourth-and-two and worked on the outside during the final minutes of the fourth quarter.

“You have to be very happy with the way Davon House played in the game,” McCarthy said. “I thought he was extremely physical. He does excellent job of getting his hands on receivers because obviously that was the big question with him coming off his injury. I thought he got off to a really good start.”

#### Special-teams trickery

After successfully pulling off a fake field goal and punt earlier this season, the Packers gave opposing teams another thing to plan for with a surprise onside kick in the first quarter while leading 7-3.

Kicker Mason Crosby had been practicing the “sky ball” kick throughout practice this past week to favorable results. He did it against against St. Louis, which led to a Lattimore recovery after heads-up plays by Jarrett Bush and M.D. Jennings to take out cornerback Trumaine Johnson, one of few Rams to initially react initially to the surprise kick.

“If you play us, you’re going to be prepared for that play,” Slocum said. “If (Johnson) makes a good play on the ball, we have to go up and hit him and separate him from the ball, which Jarrett Bush did and M.D. (Jennings) right after that made contact trying to get the ball and then our pursuit got the ball.”

#### Extra points

- The Jacksonville Jaguars have ruled out running back Maurice Jones-Drew for Sunday’s game against the Packers, a troublesome sign for an offense starved for weapons.

“Obviously, he’s an excellent running back,” McCarthy said. “An all-pro repeat, an all-pro player, so once again they’re going to come in here and obviously they need a win and we’re happy to be back home.”

Jaguars coach Mike Mularkey said quarterback Blaine Gabbert has “a good chance” of playing this week after leaving Sunday’s loss to Oakland with a injury to his non-throwing shoulder.

- McCarthy said the blame was on “everyone” for the offense’s problems running the football, which included starting running back Alex Green’s managing only 35 yards on 20 carries.

“I wasn’t real happy with the production in the run game,” McCarthy said. “I thought we left too many hard yards on the field. There were too many 1, 2-yard runs that should have been hardball 3, 4, 5-yard runs. We need to improve that aspect of our offense.”

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## RAVENS

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*By Samuel Njoku*

**Jimmy Smith, CB, #22**

**Height:** 6'2"

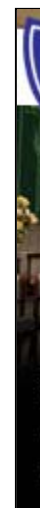
**Weight:** 210

**Age:** 24

**Hometown:** San Diego, CA

**College:** Colorado

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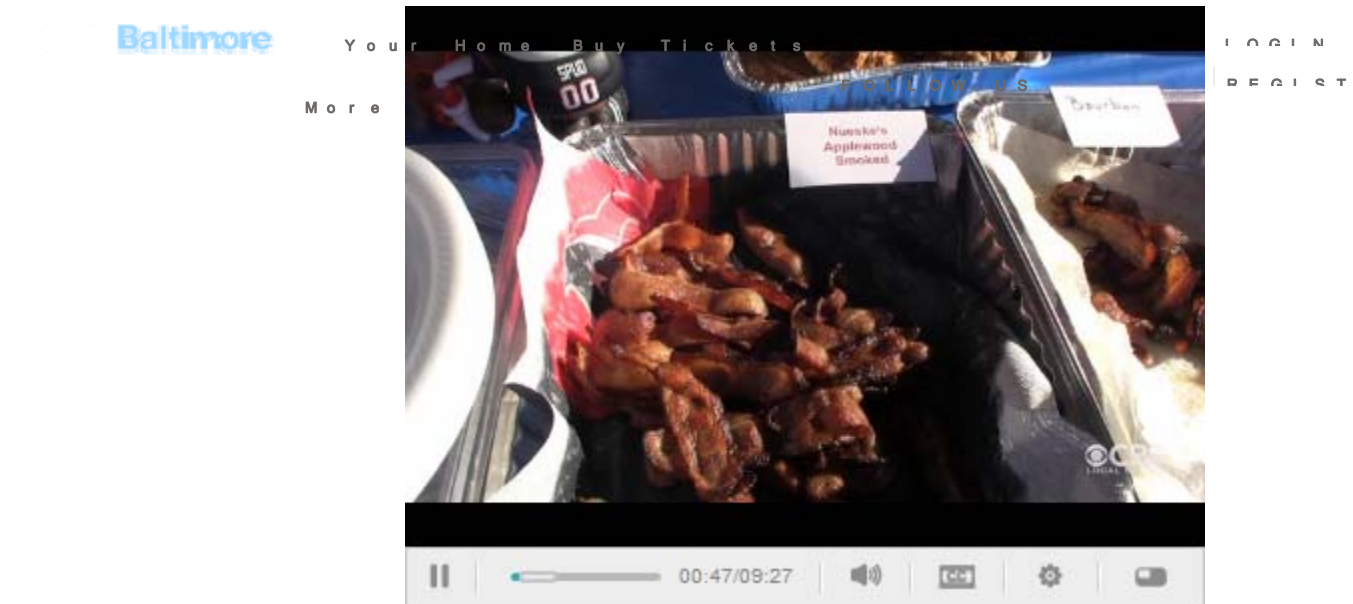
(Credit, Rob Carr/Getty Images)

The Ravens have always been a strong defense, but if there was a weak point to be found, it would be with their secondary. On January of 2011, the Ravens suffered a meltdown that cost them a trip to the AFC Championship game. They would lose to the Pittsburgh Steelers 31-24 after possessing a 21-7 lead after the half. This occurred partially because of the lack of depth at cornerback. The Ravens approached the 2011 Draft with one goal in mind: They needed to draft a cornerback to compliment Lardarius Webb. Jimmy Smith would hear his name called late in the first round, but the road to that achievement was far from easy.

Jimmy Smith's past is similar to a lot of pro athletes in his generation. He grew up in a rough neighborhood surrounded by gangs and drug dealers. The environment in which he grew up in makes it almost impossible for young men to such as Smith to succeed. But that is exactly what he did. His ability to play football kept him focused and out of trouble, so it came as no surprise when the young football player was recruited to Colorado for collegiate football.

In Colorado, Jimmy Smith made a name for himself fairly quickly. Both as a corner and contributor on special teams, Smith had a knack for making big plays in key situations. And as the number of big plays increased, so did his accolades. He would finish his collegiate career with First-Team All-Big 12 honors by his coaches as well as Second-Team All-Big 12 honors by the Associated Press. Smith would finish with 183 tackles and three interceptions.





The NFL liked what they saw on the field. He was as strong as they could find in a cornerback. And though the “shut-down corner” is an endangered species, Smith was probably as close as you get at the collegiate level. In many years of coverage, Smith allowed just 11 completions in his junior and senior years combined. Teams were enamored with the young prospect. Some predicted he would be the first cornerback selected in the draft. However, Smith would soon find out that the larger the spotlight, the larger the microscope.

Teams began to question his character and whether he could handle the pressure and glamour of the NFL. His history with the law and 3 failed drug tests went hand in hand with his stats. Rumors of abortions began to surface quickly and instantly painted a poor image of the NFL prospect. Instead of a shut-down corner from Colorado University, Smith became the young kid from Calton. And so the past, the one thing that Smith fought his whole life to run away from, almost took away his chance at playing in the NFL.

But the Baltimore Ravens saw a different Smith. The Ravens looked past the reports and rumors and saw something special. They saw a kid with a great attitude who made some mistakes. Not a bad person.

“At the end of the day, we just had a comfort level with the kid, both as a person and as a player,” said Ravens director of player personnel Eric DeCosta. “We think we’ve got a great locker room, and we think he’s going to be a guy that comes in and flourishes in our system.”





Harbaugh was more concerned with what he saw on the field, and less concerned with what he saw off the field.

"The way he plays on tape attracted me," said Coach Harbaugh. "He doesn't move like a 6-2 man; he's rare that way. He's got special talents, and he plays real hard. He's a good tackler. He's very physical. He plays the ball well downfield. Those are all things you look for in a corner."

The Ravens took a chance on Smith, and it was a chance that he wasn't going to let slip away. When asked about his past after the draft, Smith didn't hesitate to answer.

"They are done with and over with — a long time ago. I'm looking, from here on out, to be the best player and person on and off the field that I can be."

And that's exactly what Smith has done. Since the draft, nobody has even mentioned Jimmy Smith's name. The player has been quiet. He has been the model NFL citizen. At least for now, it appears the pundits that painted the young corner as a thug were wrong. And with the injury to Webb, the young corner has a chance to make teams regret passing him by in the draft.

"I've been working hard," Smith told reporters. "I took this offseason to really hone in on my skills and technique. I feel like just being a confident player, I'm ready."

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