



By: CUBuffs.com

Jenny Simpson is focused on the IAAF World Championships in Moscow.

Brooks: Simpson Running Well With Familiar Tutelage

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BOULDER — Jenny Simpson already has a legion of followers in the track and field world, but if she ever wants to organize a full-blown fan club Mark Wetmore is the guy to pull it all together.

Wetmore coached Simpson — then Jenny Barringer — at the University of Colorado, where she graduated in 2009 owning six school and five NCAA records. She's now running professionally (New Balance) and since last winter has reunited with Wetmore and associate head coach Heather Burroughs, who have steered Simpson through her training for this summer's competition in Europe.

Last month, she won the 1500m with a season-best 4:00.48 at the Monaco Herculis Diamond League meet. That time was well below the 4:05.40 that earned her the gold medal at the 2011 IAAF World Championships. Her next venue is Moscow, where the 2013 IAAF World Championships begin this weekend. The 1500m finals are scheduled for Thursday, Aug. 15.

Simpson, said Wetmore, has always had the "it" factor that drives world-class athletes and there are no signs of it fading. "Oh, yeah . . . she isn't over the hill or lost her way," he said. "She's fired up every day. Very few people I've coached are as reliably happy to be training, to come do a difficult, scary thing. She has not lost an ounce of that."

Late last November, Simpson contacted Wetmore and Burroughs about switching her training base from Colorado Springs to Boulder and having them coach her.

Recalled Wetmore: "Heather and I agreed that we would be open to the idea of working together a second time. Jenny is a rare talent, a one in ten thousand, one in a million-level talent. I may never have worked in my whole career with anybody of her talent level . . . along with that she has an extremely high work ethic.

"You put talent and work ethic together and there's almost bound to be success. She's a joy every day and has sympatico with Heather and I. We get each other . . . I think the synergy of Heather and Jenny and Mark and with Emma (Coburn) and Shaylana (Kipp) and Billy (Nelson) — there's a little community that we have of people who are on the highest of levels. It's just hard to beat."

In changing coaches, Simpson's training regimen might have changed only slightly. "We didn't ask her to bring with her a log book of workouts from the last three years," Wetmore said. "Maybe that's arrogant of us, but we feel like we had a pretty good handle on what works for us in general and what we had done with Jenny in the past. So we thought, 'Let's just build on that.'"

In an email exchange with CUBuffs.com after she left for Europe, Simpson talked about her decision to change coaches (she was formerly with Juli Benson, Air Force's head cross country and assistant track coach), her bounce back from what appeared to be a relatively subpar 2012, her marriage to distance runner Jason Simpson and several other topics.

· **CUBuffs.com:** Mark says Jason has been very good for you as a running companion. Has he supplemented your training that much?

Simpson: "Absolutely. He's an excellent companion and his running ability is such that he's a great training partner for me. I appreciate that he's always willing to do what I need and so he's often adjusting or compromising his own running week in order to join me when it matters most."

· **CUBuffs.com:** What's Jason's occupation? He obviously can make time to accompany you on trips like this and still find time to build in a regimen and enough structure to get his work done. That true?

Simpson: "Yes. Jason is a graphic designer for a Louisville company called 'Sketchfolio.' In addition to his job being online and able to be done remotely, our situation is mostly made possible by his boss. Chris (Thasiah) is an incredible support to Jason and I in that he has always been generous in his flexibility to our travel schedule and understanding when our summer gets crazy. However, in return, Jason is the most disciplined work-from-home person I have ever observed. He is tireless on the road often traveling, running with me, and then logging a 9-hour work day at the end. He often skips sight-seeing outings in order to work as well. It's a good balance though because sometimes this can create opportunities for me to support Jason in return by making his work life on the road easier in different ways."

· **CUBuffs.com:** Last year (2012) saw you "slump" a bit . . . agree? And we're told that you put that on yourself—no one else. Why the temporary drop off? Was it simply something that runners go through from time to time?

Simpson: "I think it's almost the exact opposite. I think that my 2012 season received a lot of criticism when it wasn't dramatically different from my 2011 season with the (admittedly big) exception of taking out my 2011 medal at world champs. Both seasons I ran similar times in the 800m, 1500m, and 3k distances. My performances were inconsistent over the year as a whole as well. The big difference from 2011 to 2012 was that I still managed to win a few major races in 2011 including Worlds and 5th ave mile but my fitness and times were not significantly different a year later."

· **CUBuffs.com:** You decided last winter to change coaches. Mark says it just felt natural for the three of you to be reunited. Obviously, you've run better since . . . why?

Simpson: "As a continuation of my last answer, I saw that over a longer stretch of time I just wasn't getting as much out of my training as I thought I should be. I knew how hard I was working and I didn't want winning a major race to be a matter of strategy and being in the right place at the right time, I wanted the confidence that I could be ready, fit, and powerful enough to win major races because I was better than the competition. Mark and Heather have a unique ability to take the training calendar and get people really peaked and ready at the right moments. I needed the confidence I have in them infused back into my races and I believe it's that difference people have now observed in me on the track."

· **CUBuffs.com:** Over the years, how much have Mark and Heather meant to you as an athlete and a person?

Simpson: "Mark and Heather are a great team. They don't need me to sing their praises; results speak for themselves. They have a great record with their college teams and an impressive number of their athletes go on to run successfully as professionals. I believe they care about their athletes and want to see them excel in life beyond running as well. It means a lot for a coach to champion success in their students when it is found off and beyond the track and Mark and Heather are very good at that."

· **CUBuffs.com:** How much of a confidence booster was your 5k at the U.S. Championships? (Competing in her first 5K in two years, Simpson outpaced American record-holder Molly Huddle in late June in Des Moines, Iowa.)

Simpson: "It feels great to step out and show range on the track. When I was in college I wanted to be great at every distance event. Then, as a pro I, for some reason, felt like in order to make big improvements again, I had to really narrowly focus on one event. The 5k win for me at USAs was a bit of a relief that I'm back doing what I enjoy most and I'm not having to keep as strict of blinders on."

· **CUBuffs.com:** Are you as fit and injury free as you've been in a while? Mark said there was a bit of knee inflammation before/after Des Moines, but now you're "99 44/100 percent injury free." True?

Simpson: "I am so happy to say that I'm 100 percent healthy! I did have some strange knee inflammation leading into USAs but I was really diligent about treating it and getting it under control as quickly as possible. Runners, with the impact we put our bodies through, often have some little thing here or there that they are nursing through but I've been incredibly durable this season and haven't had to endure the stress and distraction of injury hardly at all."

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