



Buff cherishes Olympics

Barringer not sure whether she will run this fall

By Ryan Thorburn

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It would be hard for any other University of Colorado student to top Jenny Barringer's summer travels.

During her working vacation in China, the CU senior participated in the opening ceremonies at the Bird's Nest, had her picture taken with president George W. Bush and former president George H.W. Bush, chatted with the First Lady, ate dinner with Redeem Teamers Dwight Howard and Chris Bosh in the Olympic Village cafeteria, cheered on the U.S. men's gymnastics team to a bronze medal, and celebrated her 22nd birthday with a traditional Chinese meal of longevity noodles with an egg on top.

Let's see, what else?

Oh yeah, Barringer also capped off her Olympic experience by setting an American record in the women's 3000-meter steeplechase, finishing ninth overall.

"That's something I'm really proud of," Barringer said on Wednesday during an interview at the Dal Ward Center. "My coach and I can look each other in the face and say this is the best season we could have pulled off. I think there were only three distance runners on the American team that ran their personal best and I was among them. I'm very proud of that."

CU cross country coach Mark Wetmore, who also made the trip to Beijing, and assistant coach Heather Burroughs want Barringer to take a few weeks off before she starts training again.

A decision has not been made on whether or not the Olympian will compete for the Buffs this fall.

In 2007, Barringer was the Big 12 and national runner-up in cross country to Texas Tech's Sally Kipyego, who is also a senior this fall.

Trying to win a national title in the event is going to be a tempting carrot to chase, even for an Olympian.

"I just came from the Olympics and I'm not guaranteed to win a race," Barringer said. "That's something that I'm really happy about. If I run this cross season it's going to be a really tough one and I'm definitely going to stick my nose in and compete with Sally as best I can."

Barringer and her coaches aren't going to decide whether she will run cross country until either the NCAA Pre-Nationals on Oct. 18 or perhaps as late as the Big 12 Championship on Nov. 1.

It has been two and a half years since Barringer has taken a break.

"For right now we're going to go in with the mindset that we're going to just ease into things. And if I feel ready to go, I'll go," Barringer said. "We're definitely going to do what's best for the team and what's best for me to compete at my best for the team over the next year."

Barringer plans to graduate in May with a degree in political science and her future plans include participating in the 2012 Olympics in London.

In the meantime, whether she competes or not, Barringer will help set the tone for the season on a young CU cross country team.

"The Olympics was just a level of racing that I've never experienced before," Barringer said. "Even at the World Championships I wasn't able to make it out of the prelim, so I didn't experience what it was like to race in a final among the best steeplechasers in the world. That's a level of intensity and competitiveness I want to bring back and share at the college level."

Sounds good to Aiu

So what was Pi'i Aiu's favorite moment of the Mississippi State Classic? It had to be listening to the public address announcer rattle off CU's starting lineup before the season opener.

"As they're announcing us it's this senior and that senior. We have five seniors and all of them are playing and contributing this year," CU's head coach said. "It's nice to have that kind of experience on the floor. And that leadership. Everybody kind of leads themselves and pitches in on what needs to be done and they kind of know where we need to go."

The Buffs -- coming off a painful 6-22 season that included a number of devastating injuries to key players -- appear to be going in the right direction again after winning the tournament in Starkville, Miss., to get off to a 3-0 start for the first time since 2001.

CU swept all three matches against Troy (25-20, 25-20, 25-22), Arkansas-Pine Bluff (25-13, 25-11, 25-9) and Mississippi (25-19, 25-21, 25-21).

Amber Sutherland returned to the lineup after redshirting last season due to a shoulder injury. Alex Buth led the Buffs with 3.22 kills per game in the tournament. And Lauren Schaefer edged out Buth for tournament most valuable player honors after racking up 21 kills, including an 8-for-8 effort against Arkansas-Pine Bluff.

CU will compete in the Emerald Beach Invitational this weekend in Corpus Christi, Texas, facing Arkansas-Little Rock at 3:30 p.m. on Friday and Texas Southern (9 a.m.) and Texas A&M Corpus Christi (6 p.m.) on Saturday.

Booters open up

A week ago the Buffs had scored a total of one goal and packed a 0-1-1 record on their trip to Lubbock, Texas. Entering Sunday's home game against James Madison, Bill Hempen's team has tallied eight goals this season and boasts a 2-1-1 record after wins over Texas Tech (3-2) and San Francisco (4-1).

Scoring slump over.

"I think at Texas Tech those freshmen really got a taste of what the Big 12 is like. Coaches were

screaming and yelling, there were yellow cards all over the place," Buff junior Nikki Marshall said after Wednesday's practice. "I think that was good for them. That was their first real eye opener and I think they're ready to go now."

Russell, who had CU's only goal through the first two games of the season, also recorded her first career assist against San Francisco and earned Big 12 newcomer of the week honors.

After focusing on scoring goals before the Texas Tech game, the theme of Hempen's practices this week is defense, defense, defense.

"We've worked on defending and not giving up shots and being a relentless defensive team," CU's head coach said. "We're in desperate need of a shutout right now and that's one of our temporary goals which will hopefully manifest itself into a season-long thing."

Hitting the links

Both CU golf teams will be in action early next week with the men competing in the University of San Francisco Invite at the Olympic Club on Monday and Tuesday and the women competing in the Colorado State Rams Classic on Monday and Tuesday at Ptarmigan.



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