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## Barringer's versatility blessing, curse

**NCAA schedule could cause Buff to miss her best event**

**By Terry Frei**  
The Denver Post

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Jenny Barringer competed in the Beijing Olympics in the Games' first women's steeplechase. (RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post )

**BOULDER** — Since setting a U.S. record in the first Olympic women's 3,000-meter steeplechase

last summer in Beijing, Colorado's Jenny Barringer has sought to prove her versatility as a runner.

The Buffaloes senior, 22, is a two-time NCAA steeplechase champion, but she may not even run the event in this year's meet early next month at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

Barringer has set five NCAA records in less than a year, three indoor and two outdoor, and done well in races ranging from 800 meters to 5,000 meters.

"For the first time, I don't really know where I belong," Barringer said. "It's been a fun and interesting year, but it also has been confusing."

When Barringer, who came to CU from the Orlando suburb of Oviedo, Fla., runs her specialty at the Big 12 Championships this weekend at Texas Tech, it will be her first competitive steeplechase since the Olympics, where she finished ninth.

Her dominance at various distances in her senior track season for the Buffaloes is even more impressive when you consider she carries a 3.5 grade-point average in political science and economics; is coming off an internship in the Jefferson County campaign office of Rep. Ed Perlmutter, and volunteers for a refugee ministry that helps immigrants who have fled from political and social oppression settle in the U.S.

She has done all of that in Boulder, it seems,

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without running short of breath. She is on track to graduate in December.

"Not one day in four years have I ever regretted coming here," said Barringer, who also considered Duke, Notre Dame and Columbia. "Colorado has offered me more than I ever could have imagined."

On the floor of the House of Representatives last fall, Perl-mutter said that Barringer's American-record performance at the Olympics, mostly going against older pro runners, "made our community and nation proud."

On Tuesday, Perlmutter said, "Given the dedication and focus Jenny brought to work on my campaign, I can't wait to see the new milestones she reaches on the track."

## High standards normal

Barringer's latest NCAA record came in the 5,000 meters May 2 at Stanford. Her 15:07.64 broke the NCAA mark by 2 seconds, but she didn't celebrate.

"I wanted to break 15 minutes and I knew that was my last time to do it in college, unless I run it at nationals," she said. "It was a little sad because it was my last fun race before we go into the championship season. . . . I know I have a better race in me. I know I can do it. So I want to."

In a nutshell, that might be Jenny Barringer, who often can be spotted in and around Boulder

running with her teammates or with her boyfriend, graphic designer and artist Jason Simpson.

She sets the standards high in everything, and almost always meets them.

"She's going to leave with several NCAA championships, and quite a few NCAA and school records, so I think we would be fair in saying Jenny's been our most successful track and cross country athlete here at CU," said Heather Burroughs, a CU assistant coach who was a three-time cross country All-American for the Buffaloes.

"But I guess what's impressive is her daily demeanor," Burroughs said. "She's changed since her freshman year, but in good ways. She's more mature, she's as calm as she's always been, she's even more motivated. Success in a sport which has both an individual and a team component could be a problem for some people, but she's always valued the team component of it."

## Many choices in future

How would she summarize Barringer?

"Intelligent, charismatic, happy and humble," Burroughs said.

After the Big 12 meet, Barringer will assess her performance in her first steeplechase of the season, and then confer with Burroughs and CU head coach Mark Wetmore about what she'll run, first in the May 29-30 NCAA Regional meet at

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Oklahoma, and then the nationals at Arkansas (on June 10-13).

Barringer most likely will go for a third steeplechase title, but she has options.

"I'm further ahead now in the 5K than I am in the other events," she said. "The steeple is a whole other world. It's the coolest event for me because it's taken me around the world, and I have this love affair with it because it's given me so many opportunities. The opportunity to break my 9:29 time from last year is enticing. To be able to go out and run a really incredible time that's going to stand in the record books for years, that's really enticing, too."

The 5,000 meters and 3,000-meter steeplechase are on the same day at the NCAA meets, so running both events isn't realistic. After picking between those two, though, she could add the 1,500 meters. The competition in the "metric mile" against middle-distance specialists likely would be much more formidable for Barringer, the middle-distance interloper, than in the longer events.

If Barringer had turned pro after the Olympics, signing with one of the shoe-company backed teams that courted her, none of this would be happening. She thought about it briefly, conferring with her father, Bruce, a professor at the University of Central Florida.

"I really believe that when I signed to perform for this school, they not only agreed to support me for four years, I agreed to run for them for

four years," Barringer said. "Plus, I've loved every minute I've had here. I'm not ready to leave college."

After running cross country for the Buffaloes in the fall and then graduating, Barringer hopes to take a break from the classroom while she begins her pro running career, before possibly enrolling in law school or graduate school.

"I know there might be some contract issues we'll have to break through, but I really hope to stay in Boulder," she said. "I have a place here. My best friends are here. I have my boyfriend here. I'm happy staying here, if they let me."

*Terry Frei: 303-954-1895 or [tfrei@denverpost.com](mailto:tfrei@denverpost.com)*

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