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## Barringer eyes future, savors present

Busy months lie ahead for Colorado track star

*By Patrick Ridgell*  
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BOULDER — Jenny Barringer's exceedingly bright future can wait just a bit longer.

Barringer's outdoor track career at Colorado ended Friday when she won her third NCAA steeplechase title, posting the world's fastest time in the event this year.

Her accomplishments at CU include five all-American track honors (four outdoor), six NCAA records and an Olympic appearance last summer. Last week, she took second at the Prefontaine Classic in the 1,500 meters, posting the third-fastest time for an American in the event. She won the Honda Sports Award for track and field, plus the U.S. Track and Field Outdoor Mountain Region Track Athlete of the Year award.

Barringer's career as an amateur athlete continues. She has put off the shoe companies and other professional opportunities that await her for another chance to run cross country for the Buffs in the fall, when she'll finally exhaust her eligibility.

It was a decision she made a long time ago, and one that had its risks.

"The part about being at CU and deciding to stay, I have full resolve and don't regret it for a second," Barringer said. "So that part of it is very easy. Telling other people I'm not taking their advice — that's the hard part."

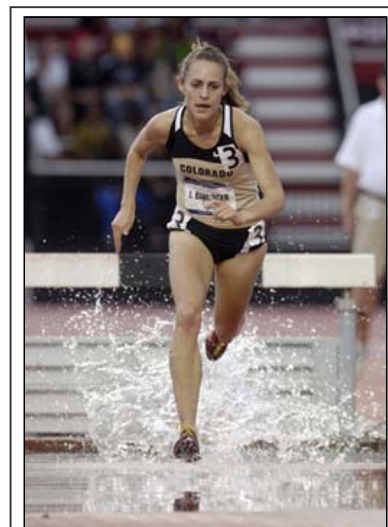
CU track coach Mark Wetmore said interest in Barringer following her ninth-place finish in the steeplechase at the Beijing Olympics last summer soared among potential employers. The risk she's taking in waiting to turn pro is the possibility she won't be that interesting again at a later date, he said.

"My argument at the time was A, she needed a rest, and B, if the rest of the year went well, she would be a lot more interesting," Wetmore said.

Wetmore said he and his staff advised her to stay in school as long as she could, but he conceded one could be suspect of their motivations for the obvious reasons. He said they also told Barringer to heed the advice of the most trustworthy advisors — the ones with no hidden agendas — she could find.

"It's been a mixed bag," Barringer said. "There were a lot of people that were well-intended around the time of the Olympics, but things have died down."

"I suspect, again this summer, some people with strong opinions and good offers will try to persuade me. I've been so outspoken about my decision that more and more people are really respecting that and respecting the fact I won't change my mind."



Colorado's Jenny Barringer will put off a professional running career for another semester so she can finish her degrees and run cross country in the fall. **Beth Hall/AP**

Said Wetmore: "I don't know what method she used to filter out the charlatans and the cling-ons, but she has some pretty sound advice going way back. Her parents have done an excellent job with her, and I think when she gets in a situation where she has a difficult decision, they are the people she goes to."

Things clearly continue to go well for Barringer, whom Sports Illustrated featured in a full-page photo this week, showing her finishing second at the Prefontaine Classic. The USA Track and Field Championships are later this month in Oregon. Wetmore said that if things go well there, the world championships in Berlin in August will be important. Then there's also the NCAA cross country championships in November.

Barringer intends to graduate in December with degrees in political science and economics. She plans to attend law school one day, but will run professionally, as well.

"She's having an excellent year so far, but the big stuff has yet to happen," Wetmore said.

Barringer's response is "Good question!" when asked what her future holds beyond this fall. She said she wants to find an agent and a coach, plus deal with the shoe companies, by September. She said those shoe companies and prospective agents have been "really respectful," only putting out feelers with Wetmore within the windows through which they can contact her.

Barringer has stayed active with her church, working with refugees, and even tutoring a deaf 4-year-old boy in sign language. Wetmore said she accommodates two or three interview requests a day. When she interviewed with the Times-Call a few days ago, she was getting ready to take another young child, whom she babysits, to see the new movie, "Up."

"She's the most accomplished female track and field athlete ever at CU, and maybe the most accomplished athlete of either gender ever at CU," Wetmore said. "She's an impeccable role model. She has set school records that young women for generations will be chasing."

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