



Wetmore's Buffs aim to out-run ranking

No. 10 CU men's team looks to finish in top 4

By Ryan Thorburn

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There was something missing during Colorado's trip to Terre Haute, Ind., for today's NCAA cross country championships.

The women's team.

For the first time since 1991, CU did not qualify a women's team for the event. To put that streak in perspective, Jenny Barringer was born in 1986.

It sounds like Mark Wetmore -- the only Division I cross country coach to win all four NCAA titles (men's and women's team and men's and women's individual) at the same school -- will be hitting the recruiting trail running next month to make sure a new streak begins in 2009.

"Our sport, which is basically a year-round sport, waits for no man. And so we don't have time to spend second-guessing ourselves or wringing our hands," Wetmore said. "We saw good potential two years ago and last year, so we've had two disappointing years in a row now and it may be time for us to look beyond the potential here and start to look at potential elsewhere and maybe look to new people."

Right now Wetmore is focused on getting the most out of his 10th-ranked men's team, which earned an automatic bid to nationals by winning the Mountain Region championship in Fort Collins.

Jordan Kyle led CU by taking sixth overall, followed by Richard Medina (eighth), Chris Pannone (ninth), Kenyon Neuman (13th) and Seth DeMoor (18th).

"The NCAA is chaotic. If we can stay calm and business-like in the chaos, I think we can out-run our ranking," said Wetmore, who was recently named the Mountain Region coach of the year.

The Buffs competed on the same course during the NCAApre-nationals on Oct. 18, finishing a disappointing ninth. Kyle was seventh individually.

Last year the Buffs, who have placed in the top 10 every season since 1992, finished seventh as a team. Brent Vaughn was third individually and Stephen Pifer was 34th.

This year's squad doesn't have that kind of star power leading the pack but has good balance and chemistry.

"I think what we accomplished in Fort Collins was a pretty big step for us," Neuman said. "We had a pretty rough experience at pre-nationals. A lot of teams looked really great and we had a couple guys

sick and coming back from injury. But finally seeing that we're coming around is nice to see."

The Buffs believe a top-four finish is possible if the group has a strong day.

"The top four teams make the podium," Neuman said. "If we can do that I think we can look at ourselves and say we had a good season. Anything beyond that is icing on the cake."

This is the 17th consecutive appearance at the NCAA championships for the men's team. Today's 10K will be broadcast live on CSTV and on-line at NCAA.com beginning at 10:48 a.m.



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