



Barringer has unfinished business at CU

As Buffs star prepares for Big 12s, she vows to stay at Colorado next fall

By Kyle Ringo
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BOULDER, Colo. — It takes determination, confidence, passion and skill just to consider hanging a list of collegiate running records on a wall in your home with the idea of breaking them.

Actually getting the job done requires so much more.

Jenny Barringer met the challenge she set for herself several years ago when walked that piece of paper over to the wall and stuck it there, where she could see it every day. She has chipped away at them, slowly striking lines through the names of former record holders and their times and replacing them with her own.

It is the sort of thing that is typical of Barringer and her overachieving personality. She grew up this way, learning from her mother, Janet, and father, Bruce, a college professor whom she describes as a workaholic.

Her mom is a registered nurse who worked long hours in a trauma room in Florida to put her husband through graduate school when Jenny and her older brother, John, and younger sister, Emily, were young.

“I think I’ve always been surrounded by really motivated people,” Barringer said.

That has become obvious as Colorado fans have watched Barringer develop into one of the best young female athletes in the world, and quite possibly the best female athlete in the history of the University of Colorado.

With an Olympics already under her belt and five NCAA records to her credit, along with numerous other accomplishments and awards, Barringer is in a select group of women who have raised the bar several notches from where they found it when they came to Boulder.

Barringer’s career isn’t yet over, but her résumé speaks for itself and stacks up nicely next to the best women to have ever competed in CU colors, including former greats such as Mary Decker, Shelley Sheetz, Sara (Gorton) Slattery, Kara (Grgas-Wheeler) Goucher and Lisa Van Goor.

“I would be humbled by that notion,” Barringer said this week as she prepared for the Big 12 Conference Outdoor Track and Field Championships that begin today in Lubbock, Texas. “I really would because I would be standing in company with a lot of women who are really, incredibly talented. I’m happy to maybe consider myself among them.”

When Barringer was a freshman at CU, she was in awe of former Buff Slattery, who set the school record in the outdoor 5,000 meters at 15 minutes, 24.97 seconds. The best time Barringer had ever posted in the event to that point was well over 16 minutes. Yet, her appreciation for Slattery's accomplishment didn't intimidate her, it fueled her fire.

She added to her list of goals her desire to beat Slattery's record before finishing her college career. She didn't just accomplish that goal, she now owns the school record along with the NCAA record in five different events, including a time in the 5,000 more than 17 seconds better than Slattery's old school record.

The drive to succeed doesn't stop when her legs do. She is a star in the classroom as well, earning inclusion on the All-Big 12 academic team for three consecutive years. She has 3.52 grade point average and will graduate with a double major in December in political science and economics.

She wants to go to law school some day and isn't ruling out public service later in life, possibly in elected office. Can you say President or Senator Barringer? Maybe she will become the second Supreme Court Justice from CU, joining former Buff football player Byron "Whizzer" White.

"I think a lot of it is intrinsic," Barringer said when asked where she gets her desire to succeed. "A lot of it is really connected to my faith. I know that is definitely a driving force. I really believe that we're made for a purpose and I believe that this period of my life is meant to be dedicated, at least partially, to running. Whatever I'm dedicated to I want to put all of my effort in and do it really well."

Colorado assistant coach Heather Burroughs recently approached Barringer before a long workout run and told her head coach Mark Wetmore wanted to speak with her when she was done. Anxiety and dread began to well up inside her.

More than a few people have suggested in recent months that Barringer would be best served to capitalize on all her successes over the past year by turning pro this summer and not returning to school in the fall. She still has a year of eligibility in cross country and in indoor track.

Barringer had allowed herself to believe that Wetmore might be planning to tell her the same thing and this was the reason he wanted to speak with her after her run. After all, Wetmore just didn't ask to see her after practice every day. It must be something important.

She spent 15 miles running through scenarios and forming a plan for how she would look Wetmore in the eye and tell him he was crazy and there is no way she is leaving CU early. When she finished her run and approached her coach, she nearly broke into tears before the first words came out of her mouth.

Wetmore simply wanted to check in with her about her recent workouts. He had no intention of telling her to turn pro. So it's easy to see why Barringer now gets a good laugh when a reporter asks her if there is any way she might change her mind over the summer and decide to turn pro.

"I cannot repay this university what they've given me, the resources and just the gift of the four years here," she said. "So the closest I can come is by fulfilling the promise I made four years ago. I'm definitely staying."

While it might seem there isn't much left for Barringer to accomplish on the college level, she insists there is still plenty of motivation to stick around for another cross country season. After all, she earned her scholarship to CU based on her cross country successes, yet she has never won the Big 12 title in the

sport, always finishing behind former Texas Tech runner Sally Kipyego.

“That’s a huge part of why I am staying,” Barringer said. “To me, that’s the most coveted award of my four years here and I still haven’t gotten it.”



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