



Buffalo harriers look to reload

Buff men not sweating NCAA title defense

By Ryan Thorburn
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The race for the White House in 2008?

Of course the Colorado men's cross country team would like to get invited back. Same story on the women's side.

But repeating as national champions is not something the program is going to be obsessed with entering the 2007 season.

"It was fun last year, obviously, winning it," senior Brent Vaughn said during the Buffs' media day at the Dal Ward Center. "But this is a completely new team ... and I don't think you can carry momentum from one season to another. I am very optimistic about this team again. I have a lot of faith in these guys."

Vaughn finished third at the Big 12 championships and 12th at the NCAA's last season. The Buffs also return Stephen Pifer, another all-American performer.

But when CU reports for official training on Aug. 21, head coach Mark Wetmore will be eager to see who is serious about filling the shoes of Erik Heinonen, Billy Nelson and James Strang. Peter Janson (senior), Chris Pannone (junior), Kenyon Neuman (sophomore), Bradley Harkrader (junior), Seth DeMoor (junior) and Robert Thayer (senior) are all candidates.

"It's a long list of guys in waiting, so to speak," Wetmore said. "And we need two or three of them to definitely make a step up this year."

The Buffs have strong recruiting classes coming in on both sides of the program, including four-time Colorado Class 5A state cross country champion Richard Medina from Grand Junction.

"Richard is a wonderful runner, and I can't wait for the people here to seem him run," said Wetmore, who plans on running his freshmen unattached in the first two meets to save their eligibility in case they aren't among the top seven on the roster. "I certainly won't be surprised if he's in uniform by the end of the season."

Erin Marston, the only returning senior, and junior Jenny Barringer will lead the women's team.

"This is my last cross country season and I'm just trying to get everything out of it," Marston said when asked about taking a leadership role on the young squad. "I've been organizing some of the workouts this summer and trying to talk to incoming freshmen about what to expect. It's a big change."

Jenny Barringer won the steeplechase at the USATF nationals over the summer and is preparing to represent the U.S. at the World Championships in Osaka, Japan, later this month. Wetmore said the talented junior is trying to balance her training to make sure she is also ready to focus on cross country this fall at CU.

The Buffs have also added five promising recruits to the women's roster.

"Right now I don't think I could predict much past two or three (spots) as to who's going to end up on the starting line in November," Wetmore said.

Notable

The CU men have won all 11 Big 12 titles and national championships in 2001, 2004 and 2006. The women have won 10 of 11 Big 12 titles and national championships in 2000 and 2004. ... The Buffs will train together at Grand Lake again during the preseason. ... There are 17 athletes from Colorado on the 2007 roster. ... The Buffs host the Rocky Mountain Shootout on Sept. 30. The Big 12 Championships will be held on Oct. 27 in Lubbock, Texas, and the NAAs return to Terre Haute, Ind., on Nov. 19.

CU cross country schedule

Home meets in all caps

Sept. 1 — CU ALUMNI/OPEN TIME TRIAL, 8:30 a.m.

Sept. 16 — CSU Invitational, Fort Collins

Sept. 29 — ROCKY MOUNTAIN SHOOTOUT, 10 a.m.

Oct. 6 — Fort Hays Invite, Hays, Kan.

Oct. 13 — Pre-Nationals, Terre Haute, Ind.

Oct. 20 — Air Force Invite, Air Force Academy

Oct. 26 — Big 12 Championships, Lubbock, Texas

Nov. 10 — NCAA Regionals, Riverdale, Utah

Nov. 19 — NCAA Championships, Terre Haute, Ind.



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