



Cross country: Wetmore's Buffs face season of rebuilding

But coach still expects teams to contend at NCAAs

By Michael Sandrock

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Each fall, when his runners return to campus for the new semester, Mark Wetmore lays out the same goal for his Colorado cross country teams: to have the runners get fitter and faster throughout the season, with a peak coming in late October and November.

The strategy worked to near perfection last season, as the CU men won the NCAA championship in Terre Haute, Ind., with the women placing second.

Those results continued the legacy being built by the erudite Wetmore, who cultivates patience, discipline and a strong work ethic in his athletes. Those qualities allow some of the most talented Buffs to excel on the national and even world stage after they graduate, as seen in Osaka, Japan, this week when ex-Buff Kara Goucher took the bronze medal in the 10,000 meters at the IAAF World Track and Field Championships, with junior Jenny Barringer and ex-Buffs Dathan Ritzenhein and Adam Goucher also competing.

Both Gouchers and "Ritz" all won collegiate cross country championships at CU. The long road to Terre Haute and the 2007 NCAA championships for Barringer and the Buffs starts Saturday, when CU holds its annual time trial at the Buffalo Ranch cross country course in South Boulder.

The time trial has two functions: it lets Wetmore and his assistant coaches see "who has been naughty and who has been nice over the summer" — meaning who has put in the miles; and it gives walk-ons a chance to make one of the top teams in the nation.

"The past is history; this is a completely new team," Wetmore said during an interview in his office Tuesday. "We have a great group of young men and women who we are excited about. They are a year older, and the whole chemistry is different."

The CU men and women are both facing rebuilding years, Wetmore said.

He returns two of his five scorers on the men's side. Those two are good ones, in Stephen Pifer and Brent Vaughn, with Pete Jansson, Kenyon Neuman, Seth DeMoor, Bradley Harkrader and Chris Pannone all looking to fill out the top five.

The women return three scorers; Barringer, Erin Martsen and Aislinn Ryan. The women lost No. 2 runner Liza Pascuito, who left school after becoming academically ineligible last semester, and Claire Maduza, who transferred to Wisconsin.

"We have some returning veterans, who, if they take a step up, could help us," said Wetmore.

In addition, a dozen freshmen, six women and six men, are on the team this fall. It is Wetmore's biggest frosh class ever. Some of the newcomers could make CU's top seven, and there is always a chance a walk-on will make a breakthrough at Saturday's time trial.

For the top runners, the time trial will be more of what Wetmore calls a "high-level aerobic workout," with a large pack getting whittled down as the kilometers roll by on the tough Buffalo Ranch course. Both the men and women will need a strong pack to go with the returning stars as Colorado is to do battle with teams such as Wisconsin, Iona and Arkansas on the men's side, and Stanford and Michigan for the women.

"We are going to be relatively young and inexperienced," said Wetmore.

"We are doing a little rebuilding; and we are going to have to rebuild fast if we want to be in contention."

If the Colorado runners peak in November, as they have done so successfully in the past, fans can look for the Buffs to be in contention for a national title once again. Saturday's time trial is free and open to the public. The women's 6K starts at 8:30 a.m., followed by the men's 8K.

KUWASHIRO SET FOR PEARL STREET MILE — Nanae Kuwashiro, winner of the Eldorado Springs Cure, will be going for the win in tonight's Pearl Street Mile. Kuwashiro averaged 5 minutes, 40 seconds a mile on the tough Eldorado Springs course, and can be expected to break 4:50 tonight. Up to 800 entrants are expected in the race, which features five separate starting groups.

First up is the kids' race, for those 11 and under, at 6 p.m. Race-day registration opens at 5 p.m. at the race start at 15th Street and the Pearl Street Mall. A free concert featuring Richie Furay follows, as part of the mall's 30th anniversary celebration. Details: www.boulderraces.com

KICKOFF CLASSIC — The CU Kickoff Classic 5K is set for Monday at 8 a.m. on campus. A series of shorter kids' races follow on Franklin Field at 9 a.m. The race is a fundraiser for the CU track team and is hosted by the Boulder Road Runners. ... A team of Road Runners is just back from placing fourth in the sub-masters category in Oregon's Hood to Coast Relay. The BRR team averaged 7 minutes, 12 seconds per mile for the nearly 200 miles, finishing in 23:39:23. Among other locals competing were Vickie Ash (the Maniac Moms); Melody Fairchild (Nike) and Henry Guzman (Rockin Rockies). ... Fairchild, a prep star at Boulder High School, is moving back to Boulder and will start working at Fleet Feet Sports next month. The Road Runners are hosting their monthly First Monday social on Monday from 5:30-7 p.m. at the Walnut Brewery. Free beer from Walnut is offered for those 21 and over. ...

Two races with similar names are set for Louisville. The Coal Creek Crossing 5K will be held on Sunday, with the Coal Creek Challenge cross country race coming Oct. 14. Details: www.active.com and www.comastersrun.org.

The Neder-Nederland 5K and 10K will be held Sept. 9, starting at Nederland High School just southwest of downtown Nederland. The races start together at 9 a.m. Details: www.nederlandchamber.org/Neder-Nederland. ...

The local prep cross country season kicks off Friday with the always competitive Pat Patten Invitational near the South Boulder Rec Center. The meet starts with the girls' junior varsity 5K race at 4 p.m.

DAYTON, AFRICA WIN — Boulder's Bryan Dayton defended his U.S. national 50K champ Sunday by winning the Headlands 50K in California. Dayton, a waiter at the Frasca restaurant, is the first-ever repeat 50K national champ. ... Darcy Africa, also of Boulder, continued her stellar year by winning the Cascade Crest 100 miler. Africa's time of 21 hours, nine minutes broke the course record by more than one hour. Africa finished second overall, and lost significant time when incorrect course markings led her off-course at the 50-mile mark. She was in the lead at that point.

BOLDER BOULDER MOVING SALE — In order to cut down on the heavy lifting his staff will be doing when the Bolder Boulder moves to its new headquarters next month, race director Cliff Bosley will unload lots of race gear, equipment and merchandise at a discount during an all-day, one-day sale Friday, Sept. 7 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The sale is set for the Bolder warehouse at 4571 N. Broadway in Boulder, across from Boulder Cycle Sport and Amante Coffee. Deals include T-shirts for \$1, long-sleeve T-shirts, Polo shirts and hats for \$4.99. And according to a press release, "race equipment, store fixtures and supplies for free or cheap." Details: (303) 444-RACE.

The Bolder Boulder is also once again hosting the Sombrero Ranch Roundup on Sept. 15. This is a 4.5 mile cross trail run held at the Sombrero Ranch stables off Highway 34 in Estes Park . The course covers some beautiful single-track trails, and the race is the only time runners are allowed to run on the loop. Roughly 500 people are expected. Registration: www.bolderboulder.com/sombrero.bbi

DENVER MARATHON EARLY REGISTRATION —

Friday is the final day to register for a discounted price for the Oct. 14 Denver Marathon. A registration cap of 10,000 walkers and runners is set for the marathon, which starts and finishes at the State Capitol. The early-bird cost on-line is \$85 for the marathon, \$65 for the half-marathon. Details: www.denvermarathon.com.



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