



# Five Elements of The Wetmore Factor

[Lincoln Shryack](#) on Aug 27, 2014

The Colorado Buffaloes are seemingly always in contention for a national title. The history of the program as well as Boulder's location in the Rocky Mountains makes CU the perfect spot for landing some of the best talent in the country.

Another factor setting the Buffs apart is legendary coach, **Mark Wetmore**, whose 19 years of prowess has inspired the term "**The Wetmore Factor.**"

But what is the Wetmore Factor?

The origin of that extra push Colorado runners seem to have on race day is widely debated, but there is no denying the success that Wetmore's methods have inspired. Six national titles and countless All-Americans continue to build the legend of his training program, which favors long-term development.

Here are five components to the Wetmore Factor.

## **Aerobic Metabolism**

Hang around Coach Wetmore for any extended period of time, and you are bound to hear the phrase "aerobic metabolism." This phrase is the cornerstone of the Wetmore training philosophy.

Instead of focusing so much effort on anaerobic development, the Colorado program chooses to mold aerobic monsters that are built to sustain over the 10K distance. Long runs and tempos become the most important workouts in Wetmore's program because of the lasting impact they serve when done consistently and at altitude. That altitude provides a "great stimulus for adaptation of the aerobic metabolism," Wetmore told Flotrack.

There's that phrase again. Wetmore's emphasis on this method in cross country challenges the modern thinking that speed development through quick reps is the only way to get faster. When the base grows, the athlete can handle more and more volume, which continues a cycle of improvement.

## **The Long Run**

Every team does long runs, but only the Colorado Buffaloes have the advantage of Magnolia Road. Wetmore discovered Magnolia when he moved to Boulder in 1991, and the 13-mile trail has become a staple for his teams since he took over as head coach in 1995.

Immortalized by Adam Goucher's long runs during the 1998 season, part of which was featured in the book *Running of the Buffaloes*, Magnolia is located at between 8,600-9,000 feet elevation, and described by Wetmore as "impossibly hilly."

While Magnolia has since become a tourist attraction for pro athletes and running fanatics alike, Coach Wetmore continues to employ it as a cornerstone in his famous method. Claiming that there is "no

more important workout,” the Sunday long run in Boulder gives the Buffs a step up on the competition.

### **Domestic Recruiting**

While it must be tempting to snatch up the latest international talent, Wetmore has kept his recruiting domestic during his tenure in Colorado. While other elite programs have loaded up on the best that the UK, Australia, and East Africa has to offer, he has focused on the top talent in Colorado first, and then built out his roster from the rest of the country. “It’s just more gratifying to put a team on the starting line that we felt we did a good job developing rather than just assembling,” Wetmore told Flotrack in 2010.

Staying within the region to find athletes has accomplished two things for Wetmore. For one, his stake within the state of Colorado has set up a monopoly on the very best from the Centennial State. The elite preps in Colorado want to run for Wetmore because his plan has remained consistent and he has continually churned out Olympians throughout the years. “We start first with Colorado talent. We say ‘who do we think is PAC-12 material?’ And then of course we look around the country.”

Secondly, this homegrown method has allowed former athletes to stay close to the program. Recruits see that athletes like Jenny Simpson, Emma Coburn and the Gouchers have remained loyal to the Buffs, and they know that their relationship with Wetmore will extend past their four years in Boulder.

### **Removing The Ego**

Some coaches feel obligated to give pre-race speeches to motivate their athletes before they get to the line. Not Wetmore.

Wetmore’s ability to keep it simple and avoid over-analyzing before crucial meets is an important element of the ‘factor.’ It takes a special kind of coach to realize that his work is done by November. Wetmore in an interview with *tips4running*, “I’ve never been able to think of any speech that is motivating enough, so I just try to get them to the line on time.”

Wetmore trains the Buffs all season to be prepared for conference and the NCAA meet. His philosophical methods are instilled all year round, and his athletes know what they have to do on race day without him having to tell them. This takes the pressure off of the athlete because they are not expected to do anything heroic after the gun goes off.

### **The Myth**

No matter that a book has been released detailing his coaching and personality, there remains a mythical element surrounding the aura of Wetmore.

Part of the man’s legend can be attributed to the success attained by Colorado athletes while their pony-tailed coach remains in the background, far from the spotlight. Emotionally, Wetmore never seems to get too high or too low, which can come off incorrectly as him being distant or indifferent. It’s quite the opposite. Wetmore cares immensely about the process and the development of good character in his athletes. “The best part is seeing the athletes take their character out of a scary place and managing it well, learning courage. That happens more in training and lifestyle than in racing,” Wetmore told *tips4running*. Wetmore continues to build national championship caliber teams year after year, but his primary purpose remains molding strong individuals post-Colorado. Wetmore does so by maintaining a calm demeanor and valuing consistency in training and life.