

13.

TBD Chapter Name

1968-1969 Season

Record
2-11

Head Coach
Ralph Bibler



Name	Class	Event
Mark Bailey	--	--
Robert Brooks	--	Backstroke
Michael Chandler	--	--
Charles Cowan	SO	Freestyle
Jim Cumming*	JR	Freestyle
Thomas Cummins	JR	Freestyle
Leroy Dyer	--	Breaststroke
Michael Farnsworth	SO	Manager
John Foss	--	Freestyle
Stephen Gardner	JR	Diving
Roger Hendershot	SO	Backstroke
David Heppe	--	Freestyle
Stephen Katz	SO	Butterfly
Glenn Krum	JR	Freestyle
Paul Mack	--	I.M.
Steve McCarthy	SO	I.M., Freestyle
Bill Rake*	JR	Backstroke, I.M.
Chris Rock	JR	I.M., Diving
Kurt Schmitt	FR	Freestyle
John Schneider	--	Butterfly
Ronald Sherwood	--	I.M., Freestyle
John Stryker	JR	Diving
John Towell	SR	Breaststroke
Stephen Tronstein	--	--

December, 1968

Due to ‘military obligations,’ CU swimming and diving lost the services of head coach Jim Patterson in March, 1968. Or at least, the Colorado Daily indicated as such. It’s never stated directly in a Colorado newspaper, but Patterson found himself a diving position at Oklahoma State. Perhaps he declined enlistment for Vietnam and needed a job, or he was in some sort of military program at OSU. Whatever the case, his tenure was the shortest in twenty years and he left CU feeling the team was in good hands. “I’ve worked quite hard on recruiting. Several good high school and junior college performers are due to attend CU next year. There were a couple of good freshmen this year. With the exception of CSU and maybe Air Force, we could have one of the best teams in the state next year.”

1968 was right in the middle of the Vietnam protests that were gripping college campuses at the time. This was one year before the Kent State Shootings, where the National Guard opened fire on a crowd of unarmed protesters. In October, 1967, a representative from the Central Intelligence Agency arrived on CU’s campus to begin recruiting efforts. On Wednesday, October, 25, twenty three students blocked the doors to the entrance of the CIA’s recruitment center at Folsom Stadium. Organized by the Students for Democratic Society (SDS), most of the students were quietly put on an internal university trial, with nine facing suspensions. Five of the nine appealed the suspension and were readmitted.

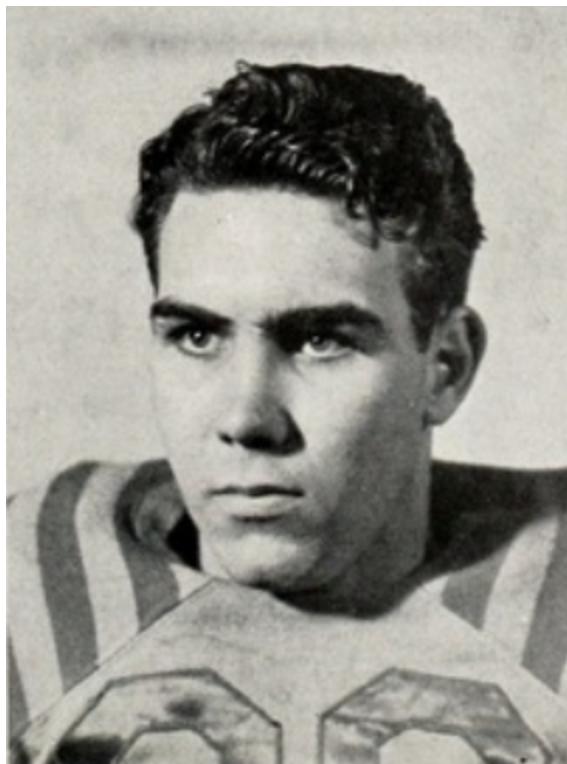
On November 21, 1968, over a year later after the CIA incident, the regents voted 3-2 to ban SDS activities from campus. A flurry of protests erupted from this decision, with an ad hoc of students and faculty organizing a committee in opposition. The committee stated that the vote was “an example of the abuses of the political and academic freedoms of the citizens of the university. The regents, in order to maintain their power, have used their position irresponsibly to alienate the citizens of the state from members of the University.” At the start of the swim season in December, 1968, the SDS remained barred from campus, with various groups protesting to get the organization re-affiliated.



SDS Ban Protest (1968 or 1969)

Four men had returned from the 1968 team, Cumming, Rake, Krum and Stryker, with the first two selected as captain. The 1969 team was very green, with a reported 18 freshman and six sophomores reporting in. The former assistant coach, Terry Danko, had left, and there were two new assistant coaches, Robert Shideler and Joe Jacques. Even the new head coach, Ralph Bibler, had never seen action with CU swimming. Or had he? Diligent readers will recall that Bibler served as the dive referee for the Missouri Valley championships in 1956.

Starting from the top, Bibler was born April 8, 1920 in South Dakota. His family later moved to Warsaw, Indiana, where he grew up and attended school. At Indiana High School, he received letters in track, basketball, and football. Bibler was accepted to Ball State where he played regular end in football and dabbled in track.



Ralph Bibler In Ball State Uniform (1941)

While Bibler was a senior in 1942, his education was interrupted, like so many others during that time. Bibler served in the United States Air Corp during World War II. His combat experience earned him the rank of flying officer, and he was a decorated pilot. For his actions over the South Pacific between September 29 and December 16, 1943, Bibler was awarded an Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross by the United States Fifth Air Force.

Bibler returned to Ball State after the war and continued his career with the football team there. In 1945, he was playing as the left end, by 1946 he was the assistant coach. After Ball State, Bibler attended Columbia University and later Ohio State for his education. In 1950, he was assistant coach on the Oberlin College swim team; by '51 he was head coach. Bibler remained at the post for Oberlin swimming all the way up until 1968, totalling 17 straight years. It's not clear why Bibler was in Colorado in 1956 to referee diving. Perhaps he was scouting his future position? Doubtful, but regardless, Bibler was by far the most experienced coach to ever take over for CU swimming.



Ralph Bibler, 1968, Oberlin College.

The team's only meet in December was a first. The third annual Big Eight relays. The relays started up back in 1966, but CU did not attend the first two years. It was CU's first "preseason" relay meet since the Wyoming relays shut down in 1963. This year's meet consisted of every active Big Eight team, as well as a new foe: Arkansas. It can be presumed that Arkansas was invited due to their proximity to the University of Missouri, where the meet was held.

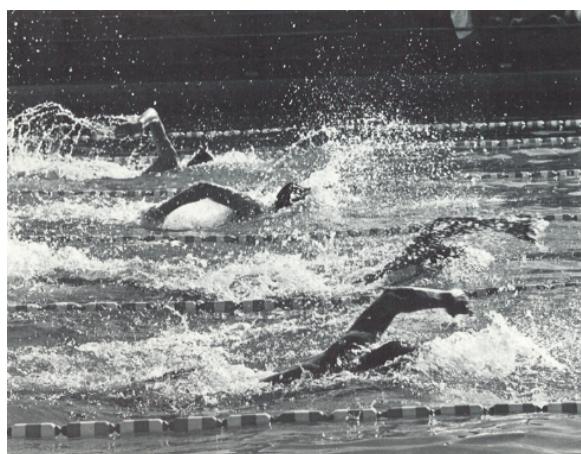
"We must develop muscle on the men. They've got a lot to learn, but they're all hard workers and could surprise us in a few meets," Bibler noted on the 5th. "We have some strong freshman candidates and the co-captain Bill Rake seems very strong in the individual medley." Bibler was under no delusions; this would be a rebuilding year, through and through. The starting rotation consisted of Cumming, the freestyle with three team records, Rake, as mentioned above, Steve Katz, the sophomore butterfly, and Roger Hendershot in the backstroke. These four were the rocks that would hopefully guide the inexperienced freshman out of the conference cellar. Top freshman prospects were Lee Dyer and Paul Mack, swimming breaststroke and Kurt Schmitt, a high school all-American in distance from Grosse Pointe Michigan.

The Big Eight relays indicated to Bibler that CU's strongest events this year were the sprints, with Cumming leading the way. Top event that day was

the 200 freestyle relay, which placed within eight tenths of a second of first. CU ended up placing tied for seventh, and would have done better if the 300 individual medley relay team hadn't been disqualified. The judges ruled that CU's anchor had left too early. "We could have placed higher, as that disqualification hurt us, but at least they know Colorado's in the conference now."

CU's next meet was against the University of Arizona on Friday the 13th in Tucson, marking CU's first ever meet in the state of Arizona. Colorado had defeated Arizona in 1968, but Bibler wasn't holding his breath. He felt it would be a close meet, as both teams held a large reserve of talented, unused freshmen.

The meet was held in the old University Pool on UA's campus. Details about this facility are thin, but what we do know is that it was constructed in 1930. CU soared to an early 23-11 lead, the highlight being the 400 medley relay, where Cummins, Mack, Katz and Krum won by a tenth of a second. Cummins and Krum also swept the 50 freestyle. After winning three consecutive events, Arizona gradually made a comeback until the score was 49-48, CU, forcing a winner take all. Krum, Cummins, Schmitt, and Cumming completed a quality two second win over Arizona's team in the 400 freestyle relay, putting CU 1-0 on the season.



Swimmers at UA Pool (1969)

January, 1969

Five teams participated in the eighth annual Denver relays that new year. Colorado State, Denver, Colorado, Northern Colorado, and Air Force. Colorado placed right in the middle, behind Colorado State and the host, Denver. Just as Coach Bibler predicted, CU's best relay was the 200 freestyle relay, where Cummins, Sherwood, Krum and Cumming posted a 1:31.3.

Paul Mack, who was at CU on a swimming scholarship, was one of Colorado's top freshmen swimming prospects. He was from the small town of Carlinville, Illinois. Mack began swimming lessons and competitions by age nine. Around the same time, he grew an interest in drawing. By fifth grade, he was drawing flip book stick figures in his textbooks. The stick figures would appear to move across the text like a movie as the pages of the book were flipped through. This love for the arts drew him to study architectural design, and he was presented with several scholarships after graduating high school in 1968.

After driving up Flagstaff Mountain and seeing the city, Mack chose CU. He earned a scholarship in swimming and majored in architecture. "I knew I wanted to be an architect, so my college experience was art, architecture, music, LSD, politics and protesting the Vietnam war," he later stated. For the Vietnam draft, a low draft number means a higher likelihood of being selected for service. Mack's number was 48, meaning there was a high likelihood he would be called. By the end of his freshman year, he was still swimming and had not been enlisted.

It had been four years since Colorado's last duel with Oklahoma, and it was now time for this generation to face the Sooners. This year's Oklahoma team was just as deadly as the 1965 team, and it would take nothing short of a miracle for CU to pull out a win. News reports from this meet run thin, so we'll keep this short. Oklahoma completed a 1-2 sweep in six events, while Cumming was CU's only breadwinner that day, taking home the 50 freestyle in 22.7. The 400 freestyle relay also managed to barely beat Oklahoma, bringing the final score to 75-29.

This endeavor was part of a weekend road trip to the Sooner State, where Colorado was scheduled to play

OU and OSU on the 10th and 11th. Up in Stillwater, Colorado only fared marginally better. Oklahoma State got off to an electric start, winning the 400 medley relay and sweeping three of the first four individual events. It wasn't until the rookie John Stryker posted a 208.6 in the diving and Steve Katz a 2:09.5 in the 200 butterfly when CU began to put points on the board. Speaking of rookies, of the 66 points OSU scored that day, 48 $\frac{3}{4}$ of them came from their freshmen or sophomores. Cumming was CU's top scorer that day, winning the 50 freestyle and anchoring CU's winning 400 freestyle relay team.

Colorado swimmers met up with Jim Patterson again, now coaching for the Cowboys. It probably felt good for Patterson to be back in his element as a dive coach, but OSU still fell short in the diving. It wasn't enough to stem the tide; however, as Oklahoma State walked away with a 66-38 win. This meet also holds a special mark, as it was one of the last meets held in the old 20 yard pool. Only a few weeks later, a new HPER complex opened, with a natatorium fit to host the 1969 Big Eight Championships.

Denver was fresh off their first losing season since 1953, and Coach Tom Murphy was hoping to turn things back around in 1969. Murphy had recruited heavily in California, and the Kynewisbok Yearbook joked that DU had no problems winning the NCAA Championship this year. Colorado was just one of many in the list to be defeated by DU. On the Pioneers' side, Roger Moore and Dee Renfro each won two events, cornering the freestyle. Or at least, that is what we are assuming, as the official meet result is unfortunately missing the 500 freestyle.

The final score of 63-41 is deceptive, as the Colorado Daily notes that the only event in which CU was severely outclassed was the one meter diving. Bill Rake set a new varsity record at 2:11.5, beating John Waggoner's 2:12.4 from 1967. Cummins and Cummings placed second and third in the 50 freestyle, just barely behind Renfro of Denver. Rake then won the 200 backstroke, keeping CU in the competition. Naysayers of the 1969 CU team will probably omit the fact that the 400 freestyle relay team was undefeated by this point of the season. Cummings, Cumming, Krum and Cowan continued

this streak by beating the DU team with a time of 3:26.6.

February, 1969

On February 1st, the Buffs traveled to Lawrence to participate in a triangular between Kansas and Missouri. It was here that Katz set a new varsity record in the 200 butterfly at 2:12.2. Marking the second varsity record broken in four days, it was only enough to place third at the triangular. Colorado's best event was the 100 freestyle, where Cumming again finished second followed by Mack in third. CU fared better against Missouri, but with a complete lack of first places, it's no surprise that they were coming back to Boulder 1-5 on the season.

The meet against Iowa State on February 7th was Colorado's home opener for 1969. Spoiler alert: there would only be two home meets for all of the 1969 season, the fewest since 1934. Craig Harper from the Colorado Daily wrote in March that, "current swimming facilities can best be described as archaic. The Buffs are forced to swim in a four lane, 25 yard long pool that is only seven feet deep." Besides the health risks associated with diving on a one meter board into a shallow pool, the four lanes meant that the team had to practice in shifts. Three meter dives were impossible to practice, so CU automatically forfeited the event in every competition. Harper explained that since there was no room for spectators in the men's pool, all meets were hosted in the women's, where a few dozen people could be crammed into what was described as a "sweat box."

Taking a glimpse into the future, on March 5th and 6th, 1969, a student referendum was held on a proposal to build a new recreation complex. If passed, \$4.5 million in student fees, spread out over a thirty year period, would be put forth for construction. The development would include an eight-lane competitive pool and a separate 18-foot deep pool for diving. There would be seating to host 1500 to 2000 spectators, as well as a hockey arena, improved gymnastics rooms, and much more. The referendum passed, and construction was planned to start January 1st, 1970. Once constructed, perhaps this state of the art facility would be the turning point for CU swimming and diving.

Iowa State went West to face three teams, Colorado, Colorado State and Wyoming, in that order. The fourteen man squad arrived in Boulder on the 7th and thoroughly wrecked Colorado 66-37. There are sadly no meet results from this day. All we know is that Cummings accounted for both of CU's wins that day: the 100 and 200 freestyles.

Phil Clement of the Colorado Daily is quoted as saying, "Nebraska's Cornhuskers handled CU like a ripe stalk when they scored a 76-28 victory at the Air Force Academy triangular meet." This was only one day after Iowa State, so presumably everyone was worn out. Of note from this competition was Chris Curtis of AFA setting a new pool record in the 1000 freestyle. Air Force emerged victorious, defeating both CU and Nebraska. It brought the Falcon's season record to a perfect 14-0, while CU's third loss in two days brought their record to 1-8. Air Force was on quite the swimming streak, as they had won twenty three consecutive meets.

Sure, CU had been having their troubles this year, but they weren't going to pass up an opportunity to beat Western State. Coach Bibler stated prior to the meet, "Every man on the squad has really put out this semester, and although the record is poor, we have set three new school records this year." Back on home turf, Colorado would be spared the difficulty of swimming at over 7,000 feet, and the stars looked aligned for CU to pull a hat trick.

Joining the list of familiar names you've already heard about were a few prospects Coach Bibler had slated to swim for the first time against Western. They were: Bailey, Brooks, McCarthy, and Tronstein. The Colorado Daily included Dyer in this list, but the athletic archive has Dyer's first meet as against Denver. It may not have been Dyer's first meet, but he picked up his first win of his swimming career, a 2:35.2 in the 200 breaststroke.

The first four events all went to Colorado. Schmitt won the 1000 freestyle, the first Colorado swimmer to do so since Tom Kahan on February 25th, 1967. Followed by Krum and Cummings in the 200 and 50 freestyle, CU found themselves up 34-9 after the first four events. "It sure is a nice feeling," Bibler stated

after the fact. Captain Bill Rake echoed this opinion, stating, "it's a change." Western State; however, rebounded and won four of the next five events. A plethora of second and third place finishes allowed CU to maintain a 20 point lead going into the final two events. Coach Bibler told his 400 freestyle relay team to just pace themselves, bringing the finals score to 60-44, CU.

There isn't much to note from the UNC quadrangular meet held on the 22nd. Based on newspaper reports, it looked as if this was originally slated to be a dual meet, but grew into a quadrangular. Denver won in a lopsided victory, winning seven of the ten events. A new team not mentioned thus far was in attendance, Mankato State, otherwise known as Minnesota State University. Don't let the Indians' fourth place this day fool you, they held a strong team in 1969 and finished 13-3 in dual meets.

The regular season would get wrapped up with a meet against a familiar foe: Colorado State. It was also CSU's final meet before their very own WAC Championships. Expectations for the two teams could not have differed more. The Rams were using the competition as a tune up for their bid in the NCAAs, while the Buffs could only try to win what handful of events they could. By the time of the dual on February 27, CSU had already qualified four individuals and one relay team for NCAAs at the University of Indiana. In 1968, CSU placed eighth. "We've been working hard in preparation for the WAC championships..." stated CSU coach Art Sollow. "I feel that our swimmers will be ready to meet with CU. I really expect some good times."

Also notable from this meet was the presence of the CU women's club team. They, too, dueled the nationally ranked CSU team, and lost in spectacular fashion. It was a blowout 98-10, with Colorado State winning all thirteen events. But what can you expect when a club team goes up against a Division I team? Wiley of CSU, who accounted for two first places that day, had beaten Olympian Candia Moore just a week prior.

On the men's side, it went about as well as you could expect. The results have been cut off half way, so our only official CU winner that day was Cumming in the

50 freestyle. This tied a ribbon onto a 2-9 seasonal record, the exact same number of wins as in 1968. Combining the last six seasons, the 1964-1969 swim teams posted a .194 winning percentage, the worst six year stretch in all of Colorado swimming and diving.

Big Eight Championships - Mar 5 - 7, 1969



Unknown CU Swimmer (1969)

On March 1st, 1969, the Colvin Recreation Center opened its doors to Oklahoma State University. Among other amenities, this brought a new pool to the OSU swim team, and the Big Eight championships were held there in 1969. The Colvin Center would serve as OSU's pool until swimming was cut in [cannot find date].

On the topic of cut swim teams, the Big Eight championships were down to just seven teams this year. The missing team? Kansas State. 1948, 1962, and now 1969 were all years in which KSU had their swim teams cut. While the '48 and '62 teams were shuttered due to low performance and lack of interest, '69 was due to an almost improbable reason.

The antiwar movements that gripped east coast campuses and urban centers in the mid 60s were slow to reach the central plains. Kansas was broadly a military state due to a 1931 law that required two years in ROTC for all males enrolled in a college. As Vietnam dragged on, pressure mounted from antiwar groups, and the Kansas governor repealed this law in 1965. While ROTC enrollment plummeted following this decision, KSU gradually slipped deeper into antiwar unrest. KSU's student run newspaper, the

Kansas State Collegian, began regularly reporting on events happening in Saigon in the late 60s. Senator Robert Kennedy visited campus on March 18, 1968, less than three months before his assassination. His speech that day called for the removal of US forces from the conflict. "So I come here today, to this great University, to ask your help: not for me, but for your country and for the people of Vietnam."

While Kennedy never directly called for violence, KSU campus was already in turmoil. On January 15, 1965, two music students set fire to the historic auditorium. The fire engulfed the auditorium in short order and the 65 year old building was completely incinerated. The two arsonists arrested for the event did not have anti-Vietnam War sentiments, but were rather members of the "Burn the Barn" group, an organization that was critical of the auditorium's condition. As a result, all musical and stage equipment were transferred to Nichols Hall.

With the burning of the auditorium still fresh in the campus psyche and Vietnam protests escalating throughout the country, the stage was set for another incident. On Thursday, December 12, 1968, a small pile of dry leaves was found alight next to the

administration building, Anderson Hall. KSU president James McCain put the campus on alert, ordering all janitors, night watchmen and campus police to keep their eyes open. The leaf fire was described as "suspiciously like something that was done deliberately."

This preparation was ultimately unsuccessful, as late in the evening on Friday the 13th, a fire was started at Nichols Hall. The arsonist, who was never identified or caught, pushed two wooden tables up against the doors of the building and set them alight with gasoline. Thirty minutes later, the interior of the building was completely torched. A lack of water supply and few fire trucks meant the building had no hope of being saved. The musical equipment, classrooms and college radio station were all destroyed. Ashes and smoldering debris drifted off the roof of Nichols and started house fires up to two blocks away.



Onlookers Watch Nichols Hall Burn, Dec. 13, 1968

The two pools within the building were located in the basement underneath a concrete first floor. Some accounts state that if it hadn't been for the pools, which were in a repairable shape, Nichols would have been torn down the day after the fire. Roughly \$10,000 was appropriated out of KSU's emergency maintenance fund to construct a temporary roof over the pool.



Remains of Dick Rivera's Locker, 1967 Big Eight Backstroke Champion

In addition to renovating the pool back into swimming shape, KSU regents approved some \$45,000 for an increase in campus security guards and removal of the fire damaged contents. It was estimated that the fire caused over half a million in damages. However, with the fire occurring so close to the start of the swimming season, the reconstruction of the pool would not be completed in time. Water safety courses were moved to Washburn University in Topeka, and men's swimming was called off for the season. All that remained was an empty shell of a burned out castle.

The only musical piece to survive that fateful night was the sheet music for "The Wabash Cannonball," as the director had taken it home with him that night. It was played for the first time ever at a basketball game a few days later, and it is now one of KSU's leading gameday songs. While investigations by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) never found the culprit, it is popularly believed that the arsonist had relations to antiwar movements.

This year's Big Eight also had some scoring changes introduced. Previously, individual events were scored on a 1-7, 2-5, 3-4, 4-3, 5-2, 6-1 basis, while relays were 1-14, 2-10, 3-8, 4-6, 5-4, 6-2. This year's competition allowed the top twelve to score points, with a separate consolation finals taking place for the 7 through 12 spots. As a result, the scoring for individual events were as follows: 1-16, 2-13, 3-12, 4-11, 5-10, 6-9, 7-7, 8-5, 9-4, 10-3, 11-2, 12-1. The relays were scored as 1-32, 2-26, 3-24, 4-22, 5-20, 6-18, 7-14.

Point inflation only means one thing: more power towards the larger teams. When Coach Bibler's squad of ten men left for Stillwater, there was little hope of breaking their monopoly on last place. Kansas was heavily favored to two-peat the conference title, but who would place second? Perhaps Iowa State or Oklahoma? Those would be safe bets, but Missouri was aiming to make you lose that wager. The Tigers' main goal was to finish second and qualify a swimmer for the national championships. Missouri had a 9-2 dual meet record, but the story would be that of Jerry Mossotti. Just nine tenths of a second off his 200 butterfly, he was staring at the NCAAs right in the eye.