

# Duck Tracks

By John Barton

Work hard for seven or eight years to become proficient at something—and then lose it all. Lose it all with one quick pain in your leg that feels like an electric shock followed by dull numbness. Not at all a pleasant experience. Not after seven or eight years of work—for that.

Sounds like a 10 a.m. soap-opera, doesn't it. Well, it isn't. It happened the other day to Oregon's Art Backlund. Art came to Oregon from Roseburg High School to major in education, run distance events with the Oregon track team, if he was good enough, and eventually get a job teaching someplace.

Uncle Sam permitting, he'll still graduate in education and get a job teaching—and probably be a darned good track coach some day. But for at least seven years, Art has been training hard to be a good distance runner—not just a distance runner, but a good one. There's a difference.

## Lots of Promise

As a freshman he showed a lot of promise, and he showed even more promise last year as a sophomore running the mile. This year, it was decided he should run the two-mile.

Saturday in Seattle he was clipping around the Husky oval in the seventh lap of his two-mile race. He was setting the pace, leading the race and would soon have applied his last-lap kick to win the race. Most of the spectators concede that he would have won the race.

And then came the sudden sharp feeling in his left leg. It was numb. The only thing to do was to get off the track and let the others finish the race.

Today Art Backlund is in Sacred Heart Hospital. His left leg is encased in a heavy plaster cast from hip to toe. His right leg, above the knee, is heavily taped. Under the tape is a long incision. There's another long incision in his left calf under the cast.

Backlund suffered an accident not too uncommon to athletes. The muscle which is connected to the long, hard, achilles tendon (on the back of the lower leg, right above the heel) simply contracted so hard it pulled the tendon almost completely in two.

Repairing this is not a hard job for a good surgeon. The doctor simply cuts into the calf of the leg, pulls the tendon down and fastens it together once more. Sometimes its pulled apart so far that another piece of tendon has to be grafted onto it. That's what happened in Art's case. The extra piece of tendon came out of his right thigh. That's why he has incisions in both legs.

## If He Wants to, But...

In ten days, he'll be up and around on crutches. Within six weeks he'll be out of the cast and walking around as good as ever. Then he can even run a little if he wants to.

But to start over again and become a good distance runner is not the best thing to do, the authorities say. Now, this isn't a dissertation on the sad woes of injured athletes. It's just to show that they can work pretty hard for something—and then end up with a disappointment in their prime. Just how such a thing can happen is interesting; and a little mysterious.

Take Backlund's case for instance. Art is in perfect physical condition, or he was until 3:20 p.m. last Saturday. He's in perfect health. He was warm when the tendon broke because he had been running for seven laps. He wasn't pressed because he was ahead and the nearest man was ten yards back. That's a safe margin in most distance races.

Why did the tendon decide to break at that particular moment? Track Coach Bill Bowerman says no one is just sure why those things happen. Experts have advanced plenty of theories and explanations, most of which are probably right, but they have no proof, he says, on just why that muscle would suddenly contract and snap the tendon.

## A 'Funny' Sport

Track is a "funny" sport. It doesn't attract tens of thousands of cheering people. Bookies don't take many bets on track meets. No one tries to fix college track meets to beat the bookies. It doesn't have the glory of a 90 yard run or a 30-foot one-handed field goal. But it has plenty of glory for the participants. And it has plenty of disappointments for guys like Art.

And it has plenty of plain old hard, tedious work—called training. With Backlund running the two-mile race, Oregon had good chances for the Northern Division cinder championship this year. The Webfoots still have good chances for the ND title, but they're dimmed a bit by Art's absence. He'll be when the public address system calls for two-milers to report to the judges stand. And he'll be missed when the final points are added up.

If you plan to see any Oregon track meets this year, if you read about the Webfoot cinder squad in the papers, if you saw them perform last year—if you have any interest in track at all, drop the Swede a line. He's at Sacred Heart. He'll be there for the next nine days or so. He'll be glad to hear that you're interested.

## Student Demand For Summer Jobs Revealed High

Applications received by the University employment office show a heavy demand among students for summer employment, according to Miss Shirley Sylvester, office manager.

Students are willing to work almost anywhere, and the campus office has received applications from such places as Minnesota and Texas. Last year many students traveled up and down the Willamette Valley, stopping wherever they could find work.

Jobs in summer camps, summer resorts, canneries, offices, department stores, and mill and construction work are among those that have been filled by the employment office in the past. The office filled 187 positions during March alone. Of these 80 were here on campus.

## Taylor, Leeper To Visit OSC

H. R. Taylor, head of the psychology department, and R. W. Leeper, professor of psychology, will speak to students at Oregon State College today. The invitation to address Oregon State students was extended by J. W. Sherman, acting head of the OSC psychology department.

Taylor will speak to a group of students at 4 p.m. concerning graduate work in psychology, and occupational opportunities in the field.

Leeper will address a group of the faculty at 7:30 p.m. on the topic of Freud's influence on theories of psychology, and on Freud's book, "Civilization and its Discontents."

There were 235,800 more persons injured in U. S. motor vehicle accidents last year than in 1949.



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