



Photo by Steve Schneider

Robin Baker, shown winning the Garrie Franklin Classic in September, doesn't like to look back on her performances. This cross country season is the first she has been completely injury-free. Baker has finished first twice, fourth and eighth, and been Oregon's number one runner three times.

Baker looks to the future, hopes to make up lost time

By MARK STEWART
Of the Emerald

Robin Baker doesn't like to reminisce about her running.

"I don't like looking back to past performances," she says. "I just look to next week and to the next competition. Because I've had so many injuries, so much time off, I feel like I'm making up lost time."

Making up lost time she is. This cross country season is the first that Baker hasn't been injured and she has responded by being Oregon's number one runner in three out of the four meets. And in the four meets she has finished first twice.

Baker, a senior from Eugene, began her collegiate running career at Oregon State, staying four terms.

"My first day the assistant coach wanted us to slow down because he had a sideache," Baker says of her first OSU workout. She transferred to Oregon during her sophomore year because the coaching at OSU was unsatisfactory.

"The coach up there had not been a track coach before, she says, "and didn't know a thing about distance running. Two in the field events quit because of no coaching."

In the OSU track program, Baker ran 800 meters, mile and a leg on the mile relay. "I was the top distance runner, but there were only three out and one had never run distances before," she says. "I

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was top dog, but there was not much to be top dog over at that school."

"I came to Oregon because the competition was better. I would rather be fourth or fifth on this team rather than be top runner on a team that doesn't have very much talent."

She also had other reasons for transferring. One was a major change.

"The running atmosphere was better here," she says explaining her other reason. "I guess I felt more at home running in Eugene."

Baker didn't run on the track team during spring 1977 but ran cross country last fall until she injured her back halfway through the season.

"I think I could have had a good season," she says, "but on a day I was feeling good, I went down a hill a little too hard," and she hurt her back. Until her injury, Baker had finished third in a dual meet with Oregon state, third in the Portland State Invitational and eighth in the Oregon-Seattle Pacific dual.

Last spring, Baker ran for the Oregon Track club, but meets infrequent. In the Prefontaine Classic, she ran a personal best in the 800. "I got ninth, but the competition was so much better than I had been running against to that time I just wasn't ready for it."

This cross country season, Baker has shaken the injury jinx that has followed her throughout her career.

"I ran all summer to keep in

shape," she says. "Being able to run year-around has helped. I'm doing nothing different, but getting more rest. I've had enough background so I can bounce back from an injury."

"I'm more relaxed at races this year and I'm not afraid to go out and hurt in races anymore because I know what to expect and I know what I want. I've got more confidence than the year before, and am more relaxed and that's half the battle."

Baker knows what she wants — to be one of the best women cross country runners in the country this year.

So far this year she has finished first in the Garrie Franklin Classic, eighth in the California Invitational and the first Oregon runner across the finish line, fourth in the Oregon State dual and first in the Shasta Invitational.

"I would like to finish high up in the national meet," she says. "I'd like to finish in the top 25, but in the top 15 would be better. I don't set any limitations. I don't believe in limiting aspirations — what good would that do?"

"A lot of people classify themselves and that's not a good attitude. I guess I'm not ever satisfied with myself. I look to get better each season and each race."

"I'm never overwhelmed with excitement after I finish, it's what I've always wanted to do all along," she says.

"I set fairly high expectations and goals for myself and I'm just beginning to realize them."

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