

Heinonen 'sketches' AIAW chances

With one week to go before the AIAW nationals in Austin, Texas, Oregon track coach Tom Heinonen is as sketchy about his team's chances as he will be the day before the meet.

"We have a chance to finish higher than 10th, but that's only if a lot of things go right. I don't like to go into a meet and say, 'We will score 28 points.' I'd rather say, 'We'll score 20 to 30 points.'"

Heinonen knows that everything can happen, and very often does, at a major event. There are just too many individuals, teams and event heats to reckon with.

"We find it's a pretty good idea to be conservative in the estimation of point totals," he says.

But even the lowest end of Heinonen's broad prediction seems to indicate that the Ducks have made progress over last year, when they scored 19 points and tied for tenth.

The team title race seems to be led by powerhouse UCLA, with North Carolina State, Tennessee and Florida State in pursuit. Cal State-Northridge, last year's champ in Eugene, dropped to Division II this year but will be represented in spirit by UCLA, which absorbed most of CSN's top sprinters.

The big question mark this year is how the weather and field conditions in Austin will affect the competition. Everyone expects a hot, muggy meet, and there isn't a single blade of grass in the University of Texas facility.

Heinonen sees two basic questions formed by the Austin weather. "How will the distance runners react to the conditions and how much do we ask our multi-event people to do?"

Those questions will be applied to the 11 Ducks who qualified for the meet plus the mile relay, which will add a 12th athlete to the Oregon contingent.

Oregon's most potent scoring weapon is Leann Warren. She has the nation's best 800 this year (2:01.3) and set the collegiate record in the mile at 4:30.36, which converts to about a 4:10 1,500.

But if Warren attempts a 800/1,500 double, she will have to survive the qualifying to get to finals.

"She's entertaining the thought of going for both of them," Heinonen says. "If anyone can do it, she can."

The easiest double for Warren would be the 1,500 and mile relay, Heinonen says. The hardest would be the 800/1,500. His main concern now is for Warren to have a good week of practice and avoid the minor leg problems that have bothered her the last two weeks.

Lexie Miller is Oregon's other double threat. Her 58.41 in the 400 hurdles, set last Sunday in Berkeley, and 13.67 in the 100 hurdles put her in legitimate scoring position in each event.

"Lexie will more than likely run both hurdle races," Heinonen says. "That means six races if she makes the finals in both. That would probably eliminate her from the mile relay."

"Her 100 hurdle race is coming back together now and if she's technically as sharp as she was in mid-April, she could score."

The distance events present a big question mark because of the Austin heat, but Oregon has a hotshot in Lisa O'Dea. The

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Oregon coach Tom Heinonen probably wouldn't mind a little dirt behind the ears at the AIAW nationals.

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Road racing

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playing racquetball is just as good," Blint says. "You get out of it what you put into it, and if you don't want what you get out of it, then you shouldn't do it."

Anyone interested in road racing can obtain details and registration forms for most races at Sugar Pine Ridge, next to the University Bookstore, or at Nike Eugene, in the Atrium building downtown.

According to Marsha McChesney, choosing a race to train for is an important motivating factor in keeping a regular running schedule.

"I find that it is much easier to keep up the training if I have a goal in mind of running in a road run," she says. "No matter what the distance of the road run is, you've got to put in so much training before you can run well."

Those who do put in the miles often find the results rewarding.

"I'm a guy that's dropped over 70 pounds with running," William McChesney says. "I just have a beautiful feeling about life because I have the feeling now, even at age 53, that I could go anywhere in the world that anybody wanted to go. I think I could climb Mt. Everest if they gave me the proper equipment. And that's kind of a neat feeling."

By Jim Lund

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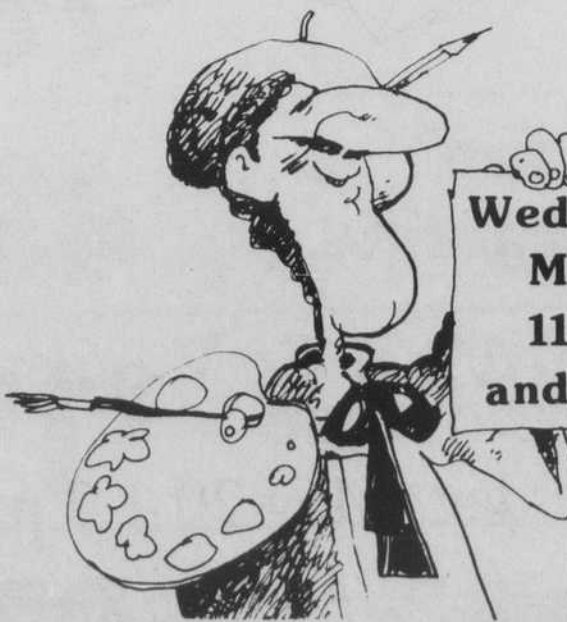
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