

# Miller keeps running

Women's track star not stopped by injuries

By Mike Riplinger  
Of the Emerald

When you ask Lexie Miller about how her season has gone, the long-legged hurdler for the Ducks looks down and replies, "Not so well."

"I've had some nagging injuries and haven't done as well as I wanted. The tendonitis in my knees have been a problem. They make it hard to compete, but I'm still looking forward to the NCAAs."

That's it.

Miller doesn't say anything else about the many different injuries that would keep many athletes off the track. Instead, she just goes about winning races and setting school records — often with no workouts in between.

"Given the circumstances, Lexie has done some pretty amazing things. She's not moaning or groaning about how beat up she is," says her coach, Mark Stream. "She has missed weeks and weeks of workouts."

Stream says Miller is suffering right now from chronic tendonitis, tendon problems in her right foot, and a swollen, enflamed joint in the big toe on that same foot.

"She has another injury, but I can't keep track of them all. Many athletes wouldn't compete with these injuries, but Lexie won't let them stop her," Stream says. Miller's other injuries include a strained hamstring and quadriceps muscle.

Still, you won't hear an excuse from Miller. She has been running on knees that doctors at one point in November, considered doing surgery on. Often this season she has had to skip workouts and compete only in meets, because that is all her injury-riddled body could stand.

Miller hasn't let her injuries stop her from being the top point scorer for the Ducks in their dual meets this season, running every distance from the sprints to the 800.

She runs well, too. Despite the injuries, she is within a second of qualifying for the NCAA in the 100, 200 and 800, and a few centimeters shy of the long jump mark — all events she just "mess(es) around in". She set the school long jump record even though she has had only 10 jumps all season, including practice and meets.

"She is the kind of athlete not to settle on

one thing," Stream says. "She is a very competitive person and expects a lot out of herself."

Miller, ranked sixth in the United States in the 400 hurdles, will run only the hurdles in the NCAA meet which runs June 1-5 in Provo, Utah.

Last year, at nationals, Miller came into the meet ranked third in the 400 hurdles, but finished a disappointing eighth, and didn't even get past the semi-finals in the 100 hurdles.

"That was the worst race of my life," Miller says of the longer race. "I've never had a race like that before. I felt like I couldn't do anything. That was the closest thing to a choke that I've ever had."

"I hadn't even really thought about it (the meet) until I got there. When I found out I was ranked third, I put a lot of pressure on myself to do well. I guess (it was) too much (pressure)."

She made up for her poor showing in the NCAAs by placing fourth in The Athletic Congress Championships (TAC) 400 hurdles, and was a finalist in the 100 hurdles. The TAC is considered a tougher meet than the NCAA, because it draws athletes from all over the nation and isn't limited to collegians. She was also a third-place finisher at the National Sports Festival.

"That's just the kind of athlete she is," Stream says. "When it counts, she really comes through."

This year, Miller has a different outlook for the NCAAs and plans to run her own race, not worrying about where she'll finish. "Whatever happens, happens," she says, shrugging her shoulders.

"I set my goals high, but when you don't reach them, it cuts you down. So I'm not going to put pressure on myself to do well, but just wait and see."

Stream says that last year, Miller had every reason to do well at the NCAAs, and when she didn't, "it left a bad taste in her mouth."

"She is a very competitive person who expects a lot out of herself. Last year she established herself as national caliber, and we thought this was the year she was going to accomplish a lot. Now she has every reason not to do well, but she won't let them stop her."



Photo by David Corey

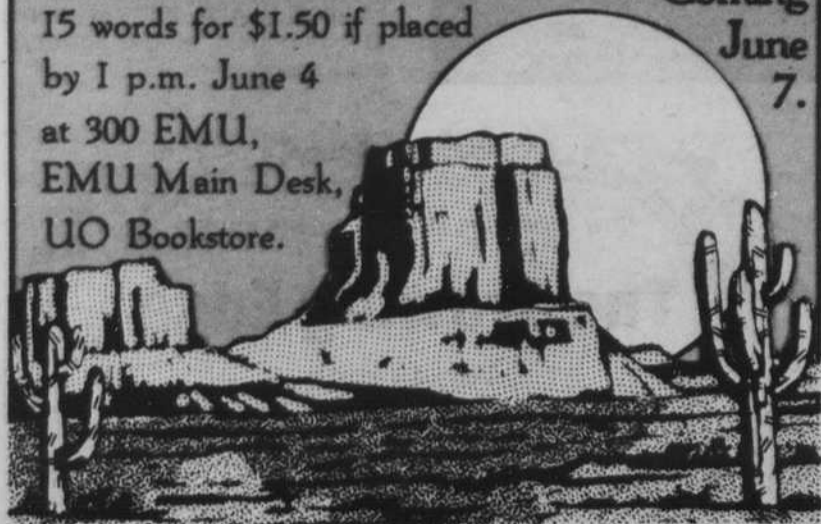
Lexie Miller qualified for the NCAA 400-meter hurdles despite injuries that have hurt her all season.

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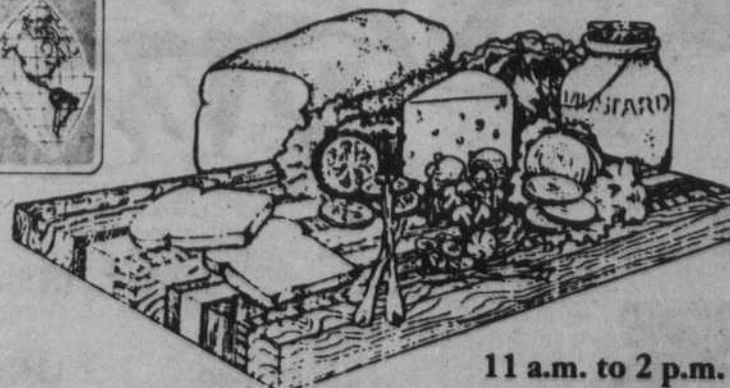
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