

Hill, men run to top; women number two

By Marcus Prater
Of the Emerald

The Oregon men's cross country team, propelled by Jim Hill's unexpected victory, pushed past favorite UCLA to capture the team title at the District 8 championship meet Saturday in Fresno, Calif.

The women couldn't get past Stanford, but their runner-up finish secured a spot in the NCAA championships next Saturday in Bloomington, Ind. Although the Cardinals outscored the Ducks 33-55 overall, Oregon's finish was enough to capture the first-ever NorPac title, since Stanford is not a conference member.

The men's total of 53 points just edged the Bruins' total of 58. The victory gives Oregon the Pac-10 crown along with a trip to Indiana Saturday.

The men were expected to finish in the top three, but Washington State's Peter Koech was supposedly unbeatable for the individual crown. However, Hill started to pull away from the field at the 2½-mile mark, and no one kept pace.

"I thought Koech was the one to beat. I started to pull away and no one went with me," Hill said. "I thought it was going to be the other way around — with me chasing Koech."

Hill finished in 28:50, 35 seconds faster than runner-up Tom Downs of Cal, 39 seconds better than the old record of 29:29 set by Washington State's Henry Rono in 1978, and 76 seconds quicker than 11th-place finisher Koech.

The junior got good support from fourth-place finisher John Zishka, while Greg Irwin finished ninth, Vance Blow 18th and Harold Kuphaldt 21st to round out the Ducks' scoring.

"I'm really pleased with the way the team did," Hill said.

"Going in, we thought we could win it. We went in with a winning attitude and I think we have a very good chance to do very good at nationals."

The Stanford women placed four runners in the top 10 including winner Ceci Hopp, who broke her old course record by finishing in 16:03, and second-place finisher Kim Schnurpfeil.

"Stanford wasn't at full strength," Oregon coach Tom Heinonen said of the Cardinal. "They were running without one of their big three. Alison Wiley didn't run, and they took a chance by running Patty Sue Plumer, who hasn't run since September. They might not be at full strength, but they're strong."

Oregon ace Kathy Hayes ran to a fourth-place finish despite a nagging injury in her left foot and limited pre-race training.

"She ran a terrific race," Heinonen said of the sophomore. "We expect Kathy, with nine days of training, will be even more competitive at nationals."

However, Hayes didn't get through the 5,000-meter race without discomfort.

"She had extreme muscle soreness after the race. She went from the bike and pool, where she had been training, to running again and her foot was not used to that," Heinonen said.

Heinonen was especially pleased with Kim Roth's seventh place finish and called the freshman "unflappable."

Heinonen said one outstanding factor that worked against the Ducks was Rosa Gutierrez getting tripped about a mile into the race.

"She got up and sprinted to catch up, but that is one problem I hope we won't have at nationals," he said.

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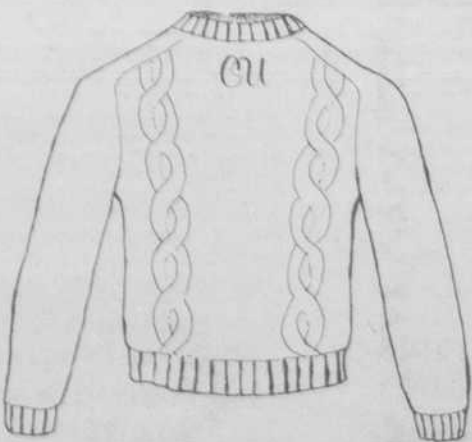
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