

Finally, Hill's cruisin'

It's been a long fall for Jim Hill. But if last week is any indication, it's headed for an upbeat finish.

The junior who saw his collegiate career threatened by scandal at the beginning of the season, gave it a big boost last weekend when he trotted home with the Pac-10 cross country championship.

In addition to the win, Hill got a lift when the National Collegiate Athletic Association decided to let him keep running as long as he pays back the \$450 he received for consultant work on a new shoe.

With that headache behind him, Hill can now concentrate on making headlines at the NCAA cross country championships this weekend at Bloomington, Ind.

Most of the headlines this fall have dealt with the possible sanctions facing Hill and brothers Dean and Brian Crouser as a result of NCAA violations regarding the receiving of free athletic equipment, and in Hill's case, money.

The NCAA has not decided the Crousers' case.

"The whole thing upset me the day it came out," said Hill. "But I did not let it worry me after that first day."

"I knew about it all summer, that something was going to happen. But when it hit the press, it was made into a really big thing. It all kind of died down

in a couple of days."

Hill's situation has not detracted from his running this season, though. With the whole scandal erased from his mind, Hill has been blazing trails this fall in leading the Oregon cross country team. He has won three meets, including last Saturday's triumph in Fresno.

One week earlier, though, at the Northern Division meet in Pullman, Wash., Hill's chance of winning a Pac-10 title seemed remote. Washington State's Peter Koech cruised past Hill and the rest of the field, winning easily.

At the Pac-10 meet, though, Hill was either in the lead or tied for it the entire race in posting the victory in 28:50. And Koech was not even in sight, finishing 10th.

"A PR (personal record) for me," Hill said with a smile. "The race felt really good. It was kind of like a road race because we were running on roads part of the time."

"I thought Koech would be there at the finish and I would have to outkick him," Hill said. "He had a bad race, obviously he can run better."

Hill, too, has seen both the good and the bad times.

The Pac-10 cross country title is a nice switch for Hill, considering he has run in the meet just once previously. Injuries have hampered him throughout

his running career at Oregon.

"Injuries have hurt him in track and cross country at the University of Oregon," said Hill's coach, Bill Dellinger. "He always seems to get injured when we don't expect it. He has been fragile for three years."

Ever since his arrival from Vienna, Va., Hill's career has been dotted with the assortment of injuries. During his freshman year his Achilles tendon flared up during cross country and he suffered a stress fracture during track season.

"The injuries really got me down because I couldn't run," Hill said. "I was just mad that I was hurt. I was still impressed with the program but I was just upset that I had to get hurt during my first year."

He did run his sophomore year, but again the injury bug made its appearance and left Hill on the shelf.

"The summer before my sophomore year, I got runner's kneecap," Hill said. "It's where the kneecap rubs against the bone."

But he ran, and ran well considering the circumstances. He finished fourth in the Pac-10 meet and qualified with the Duck team for the NCAA meet.

Hill was also beginning to make his presence known on the track. He clocked a 3:41 for the 1,500 and finished seventh in the NCAA track

championships in the 5,000.

"Jim really started showing what he could do his sophomore year," Dellinger said. "I knew all along he could run with the best of them, but injuries had constantly kept him down."

But this track season, Hill and Dellinger decided that it was in the best interest of the Duck junior to redshirt. By sitting out this spring, Hill will be able to run in the NCAA championships in Eugene in 1984 and also have a full year of cross country, explained Dellinger.

"He will have more time under his belt and I think he will be more mature," said Dellinger of Hill redshirting.

Hill, too, liked the idea of running before the homefolks his senior year.

"When I heard that the NCAAs were going to be here next season, that really helped me make up my mind."

Hill has been called by Dellinger a "workaholic." His improvements have been startling to some but not to the coach and his pupil.

"Jim runs things faster than I usually want him to," explained Dellinger. "But most good runners do that. It has been a matter of holding him back."

Not even the NCAA has been able to do that.

**Story by Steve Turcotte
Photo by Bob Baker**

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