

Sports

Beck leads Ducks to NorPac title

By Paul Danzer
Of the Emerald

With ironhorse Lexie Miller Beck leading the way, the Oregon women's track team cruised to the team title at the first-ever NorPac Conference track and field championships Saturday at Hayward Field.

Beck, competing in her last meet as a Duck at Hayward Field, ran the fastest 400-meter hurdle time of her life, led Oregon to a sweep in the 100-hurdles with a PR, and contributed to the Ducks' win in the mile relay and second-place finish in the 400-meter relay.

"I don't know how we're going to replace her," said Oregon coach Tom Heinonen of Beck after his squad had amassed 215 points to more than double the 105 points of second-place Washington.

"She went out the way she wanted to," added Heinonen, who was named the conference's Coach of the Year. "She's been our stopper for four years."

And there was no stopping Beck, Saturday.

After running in the 400-meter relay, Beck sailed to the first of two school hurdle records, winning the 100 in a time of 13.56 wind-aided. Forty minutes later she ignored the typical Hayward wind, and breezed to a record 57.6 400-hurdle win.

As if that wasn't enough, she ran her quarter of the mile relay in 55.7 as Oregon put the icing on the victory cake in the final event of the meet.

"With the wind I was happy I ran that fast," Beck said of the 400. "I'm real happy with it. I know I can run faster if it isn't windy."

What made the day especially pleasing to Beck was the fact that fellow hurdler Lisa Nicholson earned the right to join her in Houston in two weeks for the NCAA championships.

Following in Beck's footsteps, Nicholson raced to a 13.88 second-place finish in the 100 which qualified her for nationals, while Kay Garnett also garnered a PR in finishing third with a time of 13.95. Nicholson came back with her best-ever 400 (58.7) to easily

beat the NCAA qualifying standard of 1:00.

"I just wanted to run fast enough to qualify," said a smiling Nicholson, who has been working hard on qualifying in the 400. "I wanted to stay with her (Beck), and when she passed me (in the backstretch) I knew I had to run faster. Having Lexie there to push me really helped."

While the hurdlers were making a lot of the noise, Oregon also had winners in seven other events, grabbing first prize in nine of the 18 events.

Rosa Gutierrez got the ball rolling for the Ducks on Friday by running a strong 10,000 meters under the heat of the mid-afternoon sun. Only three of the five athletes who started the race were around at the end, and Gutierrez won easily in her first-ever attempt at a 10,000 in a time of 34.45.

Kathy Hayes, who didn't run Saturday's 5,000 because her foot "felt funny" and Heinonen didn't want to risk an injury, led a quartet of Ducks across the finish line in Friday's 3,000. Lisa Martin was second, Kim Roth third, and Allison Snow fourth.

Quenna Beasley also got on the scoreboard for the Ducks Friday by winning the shot put, and then got the sweep she expected by tossing the discus 173-3 on Saturday.

Oregon continued to dominate the distance events on Saturday. Martin and Snow finished 1-2 in the 5,000 with Hayes on the sidelines, Ranza Clark and Carla Johnson did the same in the 800 meters, and Claudette Groenendaal and Kim Roth finished 2-3 behind Louise Romo of Cal in the 1,500.

Groenendaal and Roth both had PRs in the event, and Groenendaal nearly caught Romo on the home stretch, but finished two-tenths of a second behind her in 2:18.4.

"I thought it would be a fast race," said Groenendaal, "but I didn't realize just how fast. I wanted to stay within striking distance of the leader."

"It looked like she (Romo) was cruising (taking it easy) in and I hoped I could catch her by surprise," Groenendaal

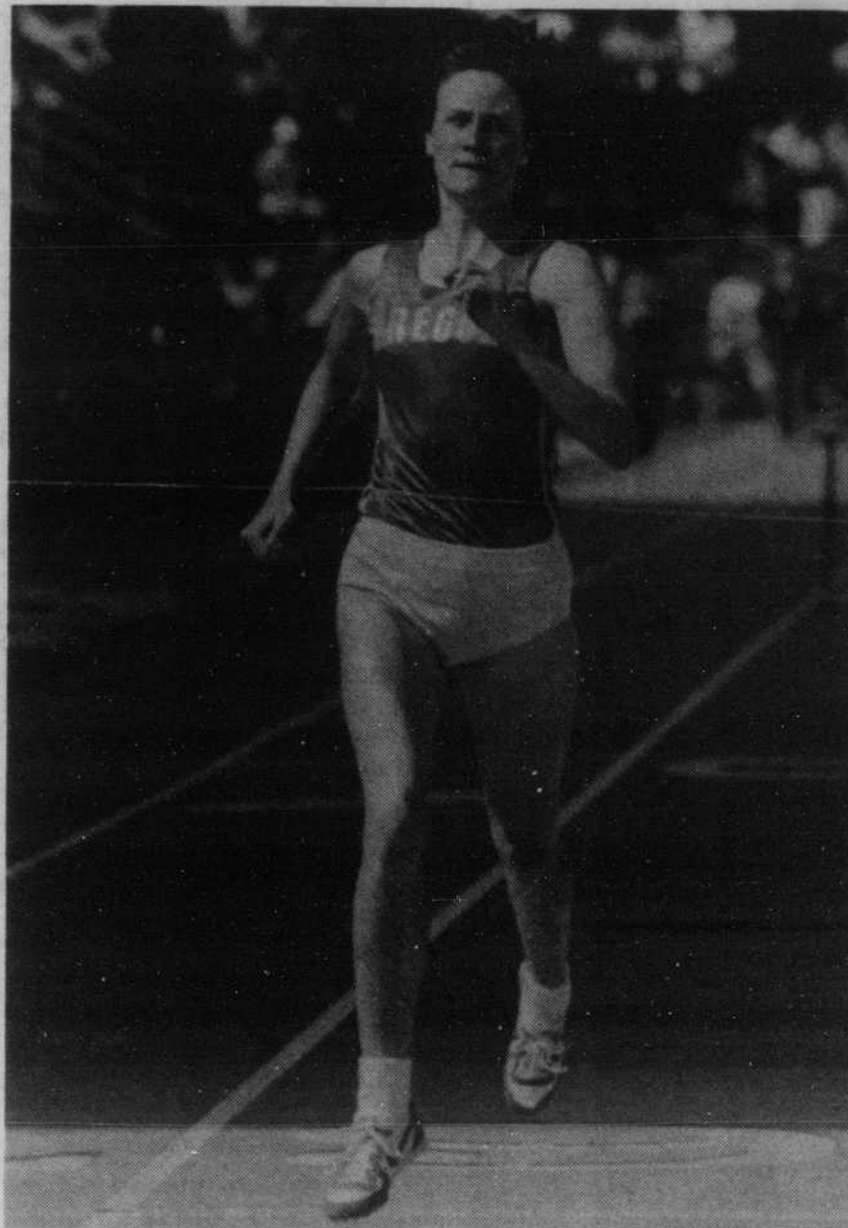


Photo by Bob Baker

With personal-best efforts in the 100 and 400-meter hurdles, senior Lexie Miller Beck led the way as the Oregon women cruised to the first-ever NorPac track and field crown Saturday at Hayward Field.

said of her kick down the stretch.

As expected, Lauri Tennant eclipsed Jeanne Borchardt's school record in the heptathlon by earning 4948 points and raising her previous best by 300 points. She capped it off by cutting seven seconds from her best time in the 800 meters, finishing second in the final heptathlon event with a time of 2:21.96.

One of the few disappointments for Oregon came in the javelin, where the Ducks had to settle for second through fourth behind Deanna Carr of Washington's throw of 180-8. Roz Rouse, competing two weeks in a row for the first time this year, managed a toss

of 160-5 to grab second, while teammates Julie Vobora and Karen Martin placed third and fourth.

Pain in her back kept Rouse from throwing during the week, but Rouse said she felt fine Saturday. "I wanted to win but I guess I wasn't ready to," Rouse said. It was the first meet this spring in which Rouse has not produced a PR.

"That's a bit hard to take," she said.

The other five NorPac track teams may have found this weekend hard to take. Behind Oregon and Washington were California (90 points), Oregon State (56), Fresno State (42) and Washington State (28).

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