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sports Pepsi Relays start today

By Steve Turcotte Of the Emerald

For coach Tom Heinonen and his Oregon women's track team, this weekend's Oregon Pepsi Relays are not to be taken lightly.

In fact, Heinonen himself admits that it is the most important meet of the season so far ranking above the dual-meet schedule and invitational meets in Berkeley and Seattle.

"This is a chance for us to get top competition in every event," says Heinonen of Friday and Saturday's meet. "This will be an introduction to big meets for us. This one has more quality than the Washington meet and we'll look at it as a steppingstone toward the NCAA meet."

The meet features high school, junior college, university and open athletes competing in 87 events over the two days. And the competition is so fierce on the women's side that Heinonen admits Oregon may not even win an event.

Most of the two-day meet features relays but there will also be a number of outstanding individual races.

In the 1,500, which is Saturday, Oregon's Ranza Clark, Claudette Groenendaal and Kim Roth will enter a loaded field that includes Debbie Scott of Canada and Sue Addison of Athletics West, both of whom have.dipped under 4:10. Oregon will load up its distance runners in the 5,000 as Eryn Forbes, Kathy Hayes, Lisa Johnson and Kim Ryan all will be looking for an NCAAqualifying time. They will be joined by Athletics West runners Marty Cooksey and Cathie Twomey and Canada's Lynn Williams.

The Ducks will also be looking to qualify a number of athletes for the NCAA Championships in the meet. Lisa Nicholson is still searching for a qualifying time in the 400 hurdles, long jumper Janell Thorsland is close and Roth should qualify in the 1,500.

In the women's sprints, the story is Florida State. The Seminoles boast four sprinters who run in the 11.4-second range and a 400-relay team which has clocked an NCAArecord 42.94. Look out for Florida State's sprint medley team, too.

The field events showcase a number of outstanding throwers, with Meg Ritchie headlining the shot put and discus. Ritchie has thrown over 60 feet in the shot and over 200 feet in the discus. In addition, there will be a number of javelin throwers who have gone over 180 feet.

On the men's side, meet officials had hoped for a shot put field that featured ex-Oregon star Dean Crouser. Crouser felt he was ready for a 70-foot throw, but a stress fracture in his foot likely will keep him out of Saturday's competition.

"I probably won't compete – I don't want to risk re-injury," says Crouser.

For the Duck men, the Oregon Relays brings about the end of the dual-meet season and the beginning of some major meets leading up to the NCAA Championships.

"We're happy to see the dualmeet season come to an end," admits assistant coach John Gillespie. "We had to do what was best for the team all season, but this week we'll do what is best for each individual."

Like the women, many of the Duck men will be going after NCAA-qualifying marks today and Saturday. In the 5,000, Chris Hamilton, John Zishka, Brad Simpson and Mike Blackmore will be trying to dip under 13:57.20 to qualify for nationals. Dub Myers and Harold Kuphaldt will be trying to qualify in the 1,500.

Among other top Oregon entries will be Kory Tarpenning in the pole vault, hurdlers LaMar Hurd and Don Ward and steeplechaser Matt McGuirk. Joining McGuirk to form an excellent steeplechase field will be Farley Gerber (8:25.8), Kelly Jensen (8:27.8), Jeff Hess (8:29.4) and Greg Duhaime (8:19.5).

The meet gets underway at 10:30 this morning while Saturday's portion begins at 11.a.m.



