

The Scot behind Oregon's field generals

Togher helps Duck throwers set marks

By Allan Lazo
Of the Emerald

Not until Dub Myers broke into the elite fraternity two weeks ago had a runner qualified for the NCAA meet; meanwhile, three of the first four Oregon qualifiers had come out of the Ducks' field people, but don't call it luck — unless of course you want to call it the luck of

the "Scottish."

Last spring, the Oregon men's track-and-field team brought in Stewart Togher, from Edinburgh, Scotland, to work with its throwing squad. So far, things have been looking up — especially for the Ducks' marks.

• Sophomore Greg Aitkenhead, who entered college with a best of 53-11 in the

shot put, then started his college career with a put of 56-4 against Fresno State University, has upped his best to 60-8. Currently, Aitkenhead is less than four inches away from the NCAA qualifying-mark of 61-0.

• Junior Ken Flax, Oregon's premier hammer thrower, began last season with a personal best of 210-7. These days, Flax has upped his own school record to 243-1 and is among the top three college throwers heading into the NCAA's.

• Senior Jeff Hultberg, who transferred from Northwest Christian College, has been a consistent performer in three events for Oregon and has shown improvement in all of them. He has qualified for the NCAA meet in the shot, and his 189-4 in the discus is only eight inches away from the NCAA qualifying standard.

"Really, the basic one (goal) is to improve," Togher says. "Every coach likes to think he has a system which he can apply to any athlete and get some improvement. That is his security, if you like."

While Togher's philosophy may seem fairly secure, the main reason for the success of the Oregon weightmen this season has been Togher's somewhat strange influence on their training.

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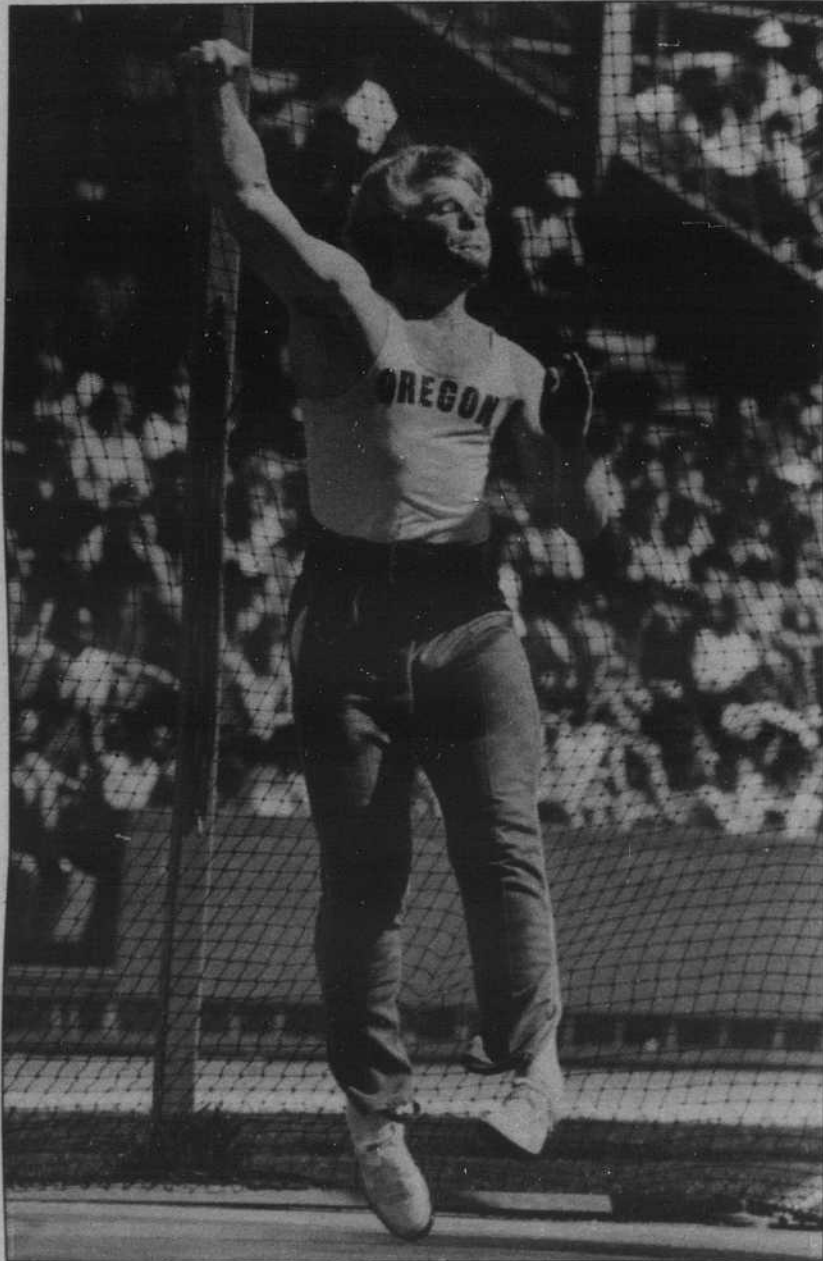
— Stewart Togher

He says that he has never met anyone who does what he does with training. He believes there may be similar types of programs in Europe, and they may be in the United States now, but he hasn't found anyone doing it.

"I throw many objects so that the skills are not too specific," explains the Scot, who was once a national 180-pound weightlifting champion. "The skill is actually throwing and making the body throw whether its throwing shot puts or medicine balls or dumbbells. What you are really doing is working all sides of the implement so your base of throwing is broader than it would be



Emerald file photo
Oregon assistant coach Stewart Togher (far left) has been the main catalyst behind the rise of field men Greg Aitkenhead (center) and Ken Flax.



Emerald file photo
Jeff Hultberg has been a major factor for the Ducks this season in the field events.

with just one instrument."

The one instrument that is Togher's specialty is the hammer where he finished third in the Scottish championships while in his 30s, and it has been his ticket to the top.

In 1980, Togher worked as part of the U.S. Olympic development program with American hammer throwers. Soon after that, he was touring the country and instructing the likes of John McArdle and Andy Bessette. Giving a clinic, he and Ken Flax met.

"I was fortunate to get under him from the beginning of my career," Flax says. "It's not often that people have a coach that is a good friend, but he is someone that I always look up to. He's a character, and I think we have a really good working relationship."

The best part about the Flax-Togher relationship is that it is working — so well, that Flax has moved from a seventh-place finish last year in the NCAA's to being heralded as one of the top collegiate hammer throwers in the country this year.

Flax says that he doesn't really have specific goals but looks at steps instead. Last year, one of his steps was to win the Pacific-10 Conference hammer championship. Flax did that and became Oregon's first Pac-10 hammer titlist.

This year, he has his sights set a little higher with more emphasis on the NCAA's. Flax also wants to do well in the TAC Meet, which is the Athletic Congress Championship held later this year.

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