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Cyclocross grabs on here

By Cliff Pfenning
 Of the Emerald

In the relatively new sport of cyclocross bike racing, Ken Allen is rapidly rising to stardom.

Cyclocross racing is a unique blend of 10-speed-bicycle racing on an all-terrain track. Riders follow a designated course that leads them over hills and through mud and has them carrying their bikes up hills and over barriers.

"It's just like a motocross, only you have to pedal," Allen said. "The U.S. has been doing it for about 10 years now."

Originally developed in Europe, the sport has caught on enough in the United States to send an American team annually to the world finals, which will be held in Belgium early next year.

Allen, a University junior, recently departed for the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo., to train for the upcoming U.S. Cyclocross Championships. The nationals, Dec. 28th, are being held in Santa Cruz, Calif.

After only four years, Allen has reached the upper echelon of the sport on the national level.

Two years ago he finished 11th in the same event and hopes to improve this year. "I'm in a good position to place in the top 10," he said. "My personal goal is top five."

Allen expects most of his competition to come from California riders and from the Northeast, "where the bulk of the population is," he said.

The weather in the Northwest, though, is one thing he



Emerald file photo
Junior Ken Allen carries his bike over rough terrain during a cyclocross meet. The U.S. now competes internationally in the sport, which originated in Europe.

has in his favor because he can train year-round. "The Northwest is a lot like the European racing circuit," Allen said. "It has sort of been a breeding ground for riders because of the


climate."

The consistent rainfall in Eugene offers plenty of opportunities to practice in bad conditions. "It's fun to get out there and slop around in the mud," Allen said. "They (meet organizers) like the mud. At Santa Cruz they'll hose down the course and make it real

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