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He's the best in the nation

*Local wheelchair racer
holds 15K world record*

By Darren Foss
Of the Emerald

Eighteen-year-old Craig Blanchette has become the most successful wheelchair athlete in the nation.

Blanchette was born without legs, but he didn't let that keep him from breaking the world record in wheelchair racing's 15-kilometer category.

Blanchette started training seven months ago and entered his first major competition on Sept. 7: the Wheels of Fire worldclass wheelchair race in Seattle. He finished fifth among 168 wheelchair racers in what was the largest wheelchair field in history. It included racers from France, Canada, Belgium and Japan.

"I still had my old chair at Wheels of Fire and finished in 43 minutes," he said.

Technology plays a big role in wheelchair racing, and after his first race, Blanchette got a sponsor, Jim Martinson. Martinson has designed his own state-of-the-art racing wheelchairs and holds the 10-kilometer world record in wheelchair racing. He also competed in the 1984 Summer Olympics.

"He has sold some of his racing chairs down here, and he came down to train with me one day," explained Blanchette. "I beat him three times in the 400 meters and almost beat him in the 100-meter dash in my old chair. Our next race was at Phoenix and he let me use one of his racing chairs, and I blew him away down there winning the race while he finished sixth."

Martinson had informally promised to sponsor anyone who could beat him in his own chair. By becoming the first racer to do this, Blanchette took him up on the offer, which included three competition trips to the location of his choice, new racing chairs and a new everyday chair.

This gave Blanchette the break he needed to become a top competitor. He went on to win the Long Beach, Calif., half-marathon and the first major event this year in Tampa, Fla., the Gasparilla Classic, in late January.

The Tampa race was his best to date



Photo by Bobbie Lo

With just seven months of training, Craig Blanchette, 18, has become a worldclass wheelchair racer.

as he set the world's record for a 15-kilometer wheelchair race with a time of 37:19, topping the old record set by Tampa's own George Murray, 38:24, by one minute.

Blanchette's margin of victory was a mere two seconds over Andre Viger of Canada, who won last year's Boston Marathon wheelchair division. Murray placed third only five seconds behind.

Blanchette earned \$1,500 for the victory.

The race was the first of seven making up the Invacare Cup series. The winner of each race is ranked number one in the nation until the next race.

Currently Blanchette is ranked number one in the nation by winning

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Man subpoenaed in investigation of bomb scare

By Jackie Barry
Of the Emerald

In a continuing investigation into the bomb scare at Oregon State University earlier this month, police on Friday served a subpoena to Robert R. Buker, ordering him to testify at a grand jury hearing later this month. Buker is a resident of Turner, a small town southeast of Salem.

The subpoena was issued by the Benton County Circuit Court. Benton County Chief Deputy District Attorney Kenneth Osher said investigators will not reveal why they want Buker's testimony.

The man arrested and charged with first-degree attempted arson in the case, 43-year-old William A. Myers, has not been formally charged. Investigators said they want to clear up some unanswered questions first.

Police arrested Myers on Feb. 6 after he admitted carrying a bomb-laden briefcase into OSU's Milne Computer Center earlier that day. However, Myers claims he was set up, telling police he carried the briefcase into the center at the re-

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Group lobbys state for athletic support

By Cliff Pfenning
Of the Emerald

According to at least one group, it's time the state helped pay for University athletics.

Support Oregon Sports recently conducted a survey of comparable institutions outside Oregon and found that the University is one of a few schools that do not receive state funding for athletics.

For the past four months, SOS has been stabilizing its organization and researching material to send to the Legislature concerning the lack of tuition waivers available to University athletes.

"We've been contacting and coordinating our activities with people in Corvallis and people in Portland to approach the state Legislature about a specific measure that would address the issue of tuition waivers," said SOS Chairman Guy Di Torrice. "That's the best strategy we've been able to come up with."

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Springfield leaders push economic development plan

By Betsy Clayton
Of the Emerald

As many as 4,000 new jobs could be created in the city of Springfield during the next 30 years if a new economic development plan to renovate three industrial sites in the city is approved by voters in a March 31 election.

The Private Investment Incentive Plan involves restructuring city sites already zoned for industrial and commercial use but that need upgrading before businesses can move in, said Sandra Rennie, former Springfield mayor and PIIP chairwoman.

The areas involved in the program include the Booth-Kelly site, which includes part of downtown; the McKenzie Gateway site near Interstate 5; and the North Springfield site, adjacent to Mar-

cola Road.

Eight of Springfield's former mayors have joined forces to support the program, making it the first time in the city's history that so many former mayors have gathered to support one cause, said John Lively, former mayor and PIIP co-chairman.

Lively described PIIP as a stimulant for the economy. "It will provide economic options for those who live here now and in the future, so people can live in Springfield and stay here," he said.

PIIP's goal is to establish an economic renewal district by upgrading sewage, drainage, roads and other features on the three industrial sites, Rennie said.

Current Mayor Richard Gorman called PIIP an aggressive step by the government to get involved in the economic

development of the city. "It will get people interested in 3,500 to 4,000 new jobs that wouldn't develop without PIIP."

Lively estimated the number of jobs PIIP could create by using national industrial development statistics and by looking at the potential of the industrial sites. Those jobs would include medium industrial work, light industrial technology and commercial-type jobs.

The creation of jobs also would be good for Springfield's youth, Lively said. "Now they graduate from high school, and there are no jobs here for them to stay for. This would give young people the option to stay if they wanted to."

Rennie sees PIIP as a "win-win" situa-

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Richard Gorman