

Men's track team wins Pepsi meet; qualifies three

By Aaron Knox
Of the Emerald

The Oregon men's track team proved to be a less than gracious host as it posted a convincing victory in the Pepsi Team Invitational at Hayward Field on Saturday.

The Ducks defeated Texas, Tennessee, and Washington State University in the quadangular competition and reaffirmed their claim on the national dual-meet championship. Oregon claimed the team title with 194.5 team points, while Texas, Tennessee and WSU finished with 169, 167.5 and 107, respectively.

Oregon used a balanced attack to post the victory under conditions which ranged from miserable to mild during the course of the meet.

The 6,149 fans who weathered the elements were rewarded for their perseverance by the addition of three new NCAA qualifiers for the Ducks and a tremendous display of team depth.

Coach Bill Dellinger's squad won just six events, compared to eight for runner-up Texas. However, the Ducks scored in every event and gained at least 10 points in 12 of the 19 events.

It was feast or famine for the Longhorns, as their eight victories produced just seven double-figure scores. Tennessee got double-figures in nine events, but posted just three wins.

The distance corps of the Ducks did its job, placing both entries in the top three in the 800, 1500, steeplechase and 5000; but it was the jumpers and sprinters that provided the spark Oregon needed to put away the speed-dominated southeastern schools.

Senior Mark Dannis finished second in both the 100 (10.66) and 200 (21.19), posting personal bests at each distance. Pat Lanning also finished fifth in the 200 and third in the 400 as Oregon battled on nearly even terms with the Longhorns and Vols in their strongest running events.

Football crossovers J. J. Birden and Latin Berry did better than stay even, with both of them earning passage to the NCAA championships.

Birden finally mastered his approach in the long jump and soared to a school-record 26-1 1/2 on his last attempt. The leap was the longest in the Pacific 10 Conference this year and moved him past Berry, whose PR of 25-4 3/4 was good enough for second place.

"I've been working on getting a consistent stride down the runway, and I hit it," Birden said. He almost hit the foul mark on the attempt and turned to the official immediately after landing, hesitating to celebrate until the white flag was up. "I really thought I'd fouled, but I knew it was close," he said.

Birden came back to claim second in the 110 high hurdles (14.55) and teammate Rod Green managed a fifth-place finish (14.74), allowing Oregon to exceed form chart projections in events where it had figured to struggle.

Berry was victimized again by last-minute heroics in the triple jump, when John Tillman of Tennessee went 53-5 1/2 on his next-to-last attempt. The mark was enough to edge Berry by two centimeters for the win, but Berry was consoled by the knowledge that his PR of 53-5 had surpassed the NCAA standard.

"They competed well, and that is the intangible that you can't measure. They responded to the competition," said assistant coach John Gillespie.

The third Oregon athlete to earn an NCAA berth was Carleton Jones in the 5000-meter event. Jones broke open a tight field at the two-mile mark by moving to the front when teammate Rick Bergesen was boxed in. "It took a lot of guts to take the lead at two miles against that kind of competition," said Bergesen.

Jones relinquished the lead to Bergesen with about 900 meters to go, but his time of 13:54.12 was good enough for second place and a trip to Baton Rouge in June.

"I still can't believe it," said Jones, who trimmed more than 28 seconds off his previous best

at the distance. "I felt tired at the start and was just trying to hang in there. The pace was a little below qualifying at two miles, so I went for it, and I felt better after that," he said.

Bergesen had qualified in the 5000 against Washington three weeks ago, but his 13:53.39 was a new PR.

The Oregon coaching staff had hoped to add more than three new NCAA qualifiers during the invitational, but the weather turned sour for the middle portion of the meet. Races run during the windy downpour became tactical, rather than all-out efforts.

"You can't beat the wind," Dellinger said. "No other factor has as much bearing on times as the wind, and the headwinds were just too strong."

The 18-25 mph gusts made a mockery out of the pole vault. Only two competitors were able to clear the bar, as Oregon's Jim

Mours managed to equal his PR of 16-4 3/4, and Washington

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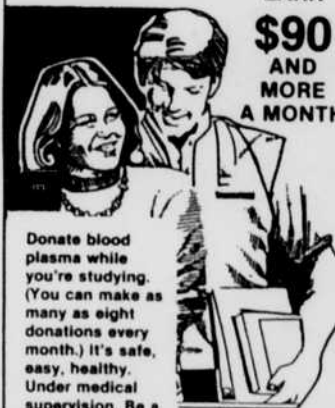
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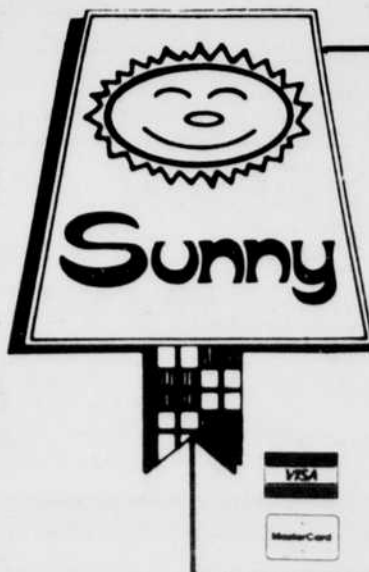
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