

Hand and Graves: different styles, same results

By Andrew LaMar

Of the Emerald

The Oregon women's cross country team is a favorite to take the country crown this year and has a shot at a national championship. The two biggest reasons are Annette Hand and Penny Graves, the team's two top runners.

Hand and Graves are about evenly matched — timewise.

Hand, a senior who transferred to Oregon a year and a half ago and attended high school in Spokane, Wash., began competing as a Duck last April. She won the Pacific 10 Conference track championship in both 3,000 and 5,000 meters last spring and finished fourth and second at those distances, respectively, at the NCAA championships with times of 9:00.5 and 15:47.74.

Graves, a junior from Port Angeles, Wash., took first place in the Pac-10 cross country championships last fall with a 16:51.7 for the 5,000-meter course. Then she finished 13th at the NCAA cross country championships with a 17:23.32 for the same distance, and in the spring she took the Pac-10 1,500 title and finished sixth in the 5,000 at the NCAA track championships with a personal record of 15:58.01.

Although similar in their accomplishments and rapid improvement, Hand and Graves have two entirely different styles.

Hand doesn't like to train a lot and in fact, doesn't like to do any unnecessary, extra work. She prefers to compete in front of crowds — the bigger, the better — and prefers track to cross country.

"I guess you could say I'm a performer," Hand said. "I love to hear the crowd scream and yell, and that just makes me more fired up about the race."

Graves, on the other hand, cherishes a training program that involves activities, such as weight lifting and swimming, that are just for fun or to "balance" her body, she said. She prefers cross country to track because it offers more variety in training and races (every course is different).

"Annette thinks that when she gets on the track she can just go, and I think when I get on the trails I can just go," Graves said. "I don't know. It's hard to explain."

Their personalities are also distinctly different.

Hand is sprightly, affable and a self-described people person who is studying elementary education. Graves is more reserved and serious, studies physical education and hopes to coach one day.

But they share a vivid intensity and a good friendship.

Ever since Hand arrived in



File Photo

Annette Hand waves to a Hayward Field crowd after winning the 5,000 meters in 16:05.24 at the Pepsi Invitational track and field meet April 18. It was her second meet after recovering from a stress fracture.

Eugene, the two have been training together, and both have said the training relationship has pushed them to better performances. As Graves improved last year, she closed the gap between herself and Hand, who was much quicker.

Each will be the other's biggest challenge in many of the races they run together, which could cause friction between the two. Head coach Tom Heinonen said it presents a nice dilemma — like choosing between Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig to bat cleanup.

As for obsessive competition between Hand and Graves, Heinonen doesn't see it happening.

"The thing to remember here is that we're talking about some awfully nice people," he said. The two are very supportive of each other and the rest of the team, he added.

Their drive and friendship has led them over formidable obstacles to success.

Hand began her college track career at Montana State, but during her junior year state budget cuts eliminated all the school's women's track scholarships except hers, and she felt it was unfair and decided to transfer to Oregon on advice from her coach. In spring 1986 she arrived in Eugene and, forced to miss the track and cross country season to regain her eligibility, began training with the team.

The toughest setback was still to come — injury. Hand sustained a stress fracture in her right thigh last February and was limited to crutches and exercising in water.

"It was really hard for me because I've never been hurt before to that extent," Hand said. "When I had to start training in the water, I didn't think it was going to work. In the back of my mind, I was thinking my season is probably over."

The thought of missing another season was very depressing, she said. And when she watched Graves qualify for the NCAA championships on March 21 in the 3,000 while she was still on crutches, she couldn't help being envious.

"I admit I was really jealous of her (then)," Hand said.

But soon after, Hand made an amazing comeback. Unsure of the effectiveness of her rehabilitation training, Hand began running on hard ground again March 24 and competing



File Photo

Penny Graves (left) nips Annie Schweitzer to win the 3,000 meters and record a personal record of 9:12.15 at the Pepsi Invitational track and field meet April 18.

again April 11.

"Her determination to come back was really impressive," Graves said.

Any doubts Hand might have had were erased in her second meet of the spring, April 18, when she blew her competitors off the course by recording a 16:05.24 in the 5,000 and thrilled a large Hayward Field crowd as she contributed to Oregon's track and field victory over three top rivals. She reduced her PR by nearly 25 seconds that afternoon.

Hand eventually shaved 42 seconds off her preseason PR for the 5,000, improving from 16:29.50 to 15:47.74. In the 3,000, she cut 44 seconds off her first spring performance (9:44.40) and broke the nine-minute barrier when she ran an 8:59.90 at the U.S. Olympic Festival in Durham, N.C., on July 24.

The only Oregon woman ever to run the 3,000 faster is the legendary Kathy Hayes, who recorded an 8:50.79 in 1983, and Hand is closing in on that. She only has one track season to do it.

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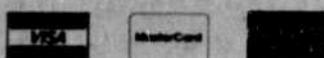
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