

# Nebraska leaves Ducks limping

## Ducks loss at Hayward first in five years

By Ashley Conklin  
Emerald Sports Reporter

In a meet otherwise marked by disaster for the Oregon men's track team, Danny Lopez was one shining light for the Ducks in their 82-81 loss to Nebraska Saturday.

It was the first loss at Hayward Field since 1985 for Oregon, although it looked like the Ducks would be able to pull this one out with world-class distance ace Dieudonne Kwizera and thrower Jeff Hooper out of the Nebraska line-up. But the Cornhuskers came up with enough to overcome Oregon.

"We really had a good meet," Nebraska coach Gary Pepin said. "Sometimes you never quite hit on all cylinders, but today we were close. I don't know if we could have competed any better. We had good competitive marks which is one thing I'm always concerned about."

For Oregon coach Bill Dellinger it was a loss, but not one he could find a lot of fault in.

"I don't feel bad about this meet," Dellinger said. "because Nebraska competed really well. I don't think there's any question they were serious about this meet."

"Most teams are shooting for us and I know that's the way it should be when you're No. 1," he said. "We're on the top of everybody's schedule and for most teams we're one of their key meets for the season."

But in the middle of it all, the Ducks could at least take solace in Lopez's stellar performance in the 3,000-meter steeplechase.

The battle between four of last year's 12 NCAA finalists in the steeplechase — Lopez, teammate Rick Mestler and Nebraska's Joe Kirby and Harald Graham — lived up to all the pre-meet hype.

On the final lap it looked like Kirby might run away with the race, but Lopez passed him at

the final water jump and came home in 8:28.44, a personal record by more than 11 seconds and the fourth fastest time in Oregon history.

After the race, Lopez said his performance — the fastest time in the college ranks this season — gave him an idea that he might be able to contend for the NCAA crown in June.

"It makes me realize that I can do something at the NCAAAs if I can beat him (Kirby) here," Lopez said.

"I didn't think about a time," he said. "I just wanted to win. I didn't even think about being in the (8:20s)."

Lopez also said he felt that if the race came down to a sprint, he could win.

"I felt I would be stronger if I sat behind and kicked at the end," he said. "He's run 13:51 for 5,000 and I've only run 14:25, but I thought I could sit back and kick past him. I felt pretty good about that."

Turn to Nebraska, Page 13

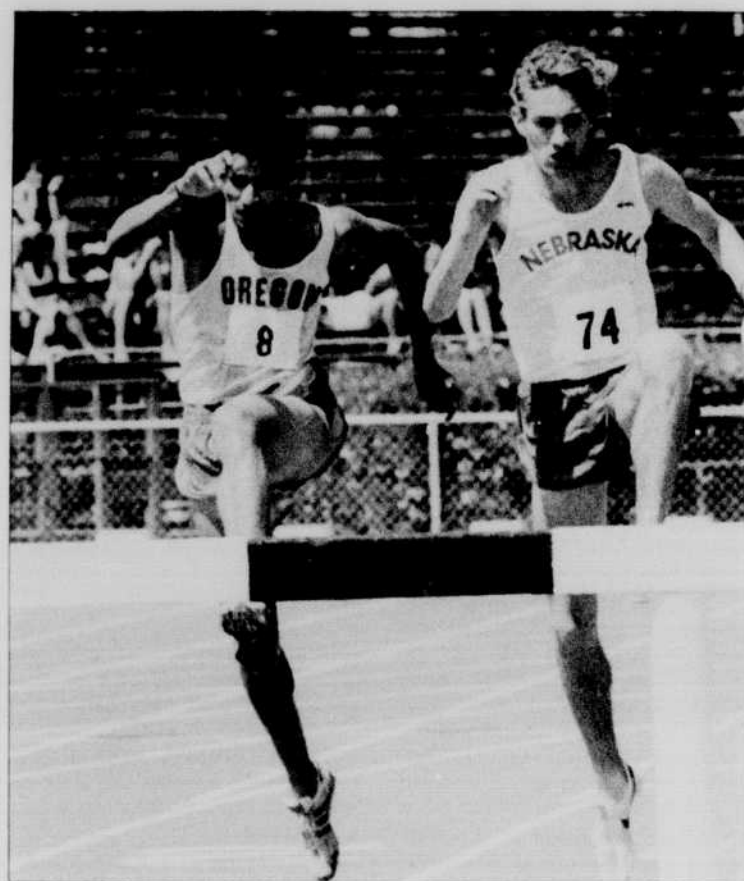


Photo by Sean Poston

Oregon's Danny Lopez fights off Nebraska's Joe Kirby in the steeplechase at Hayward Field Saturday. Lopez went on to win the event with Kirby coming in second.

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