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Kirby came across the finish line unable to stand up from exhaustion but set a PR in 8:34.45, Graham was third in 8:44.78 and Mestler clocked 8:50.93 to finish fourth.

"Danny Lopez was good for us." Dellinger said. "He ran a smart, good race. He felt good mentally and that for a runner is important. He beat a guy that was third in the NCAA a year ago and that's a real plus for Danny."

The steeplechase was run in the middle of the day's sweltering heat and Dellinger said the heat and wind definitely played a factor.

"I thought that the steeplechase would have been five seconds faster if it had been run in the twilight with no wind." he said.

The steeplechase was part of a big early-meet lead for the Ducks.

Oregon "started out doing the things I thought we had to do," Dellinger said by sweeping the hammer and pole vault, going 1-2 in the javelin and having Latin Berry win the long jump on his final leap.

But from there the meet was all Nebraska's.

The Cornhuskers picked up a surprise win in the 110-meter high hurdles when Oregon's Bob Gray fell midway through the race and couldn't finish. Still the Ducks held a 47-30 advantage at that point in the meet.

Nebraska then went 1-2 in the next four events — the 400, 100 and 800 meters and the high jump — to turn a 47-30 deficit into a 62-51 advantage.

The Cornhuskers 1-2 sweep of the 800 meters with Kirk Petit and Jerry Marsee turning in PR performances was particularly tough for the Ducks.

Dellinger wanted to double back Eric Peterson in the 800 after he won a tactical 1,500 in 3:52.11. But because of what Dellinger called "a lack of communication" between he and an assistant coach. Peterson was unable to get into the race.

"The 800 was a real blow for us," Dellinger said. "I really think if Eric would have been in the race we might have won, but we'll never know. As it turned out with some of the other things it might not have mattered."

Spencer Williams and Berry went 1-2 in the triple jump, but just before the event, Oregon's lohnny Taylor had to scratch after pulling a back muscle warming up. With Taylor, Oregon probably could have swept the triple jump.

The 5,000 meters also hurt when Jacques van Rensburg, second to Peterson in the 1,500, blew by Oregon's Brad Hudson and Peter Fonseca over the last few laps to give Nebraska an insurmountable 82-76 lead going into the 1,600-meter relay.

And then the unthinkable happened in the relay

The Cornhuskers tried a blind pass on the anchor leg and dropped the baton, allowing Oregon's Curtis Wilson to bring Oregon home in first and pull within a point.

"I don't like to lose, but I wouldn't have liked to win the meet that way." Dellinger said of the relay.

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Nebraska knotted the score at 25 two events later with a victory in the 4x100 relay.

"We made some dents early, but they hammered us after that." Heinonen said.

The 1,500 and the 800 were the unlikely downfall of the Ducks. Oregon could finish no higher than third in either event

More bad news for Oregon came at the conclusion of the 100 hurdles. Kohlmeier ran away with the race in a time of 14–14, but she hit hurdle number four with her right leg in the process.

"I knew if I hit (my leg) it would balloon up, and it did," Kohlmeier said.

Kohlmeier's status is day-to-day, and with the Pac-10 heptathlon beginning a week from today, every day is critical.

Other bright spots for Oregon came in the 400, the discus and 100.

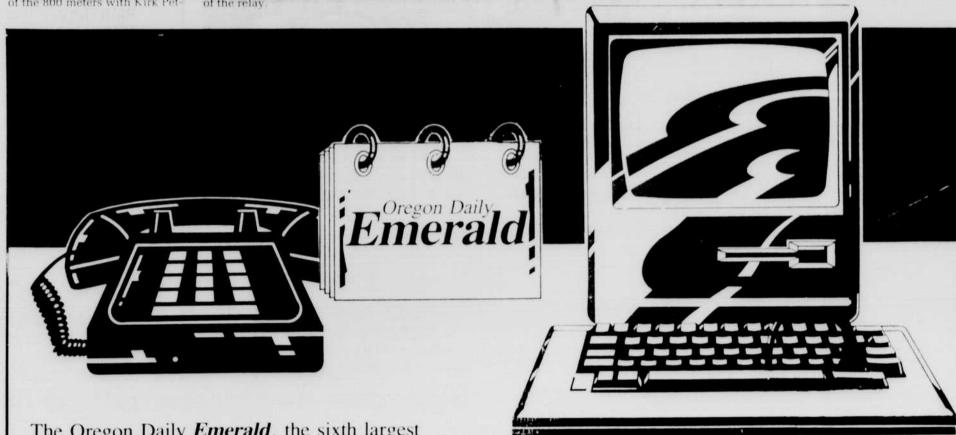
Oregon sophomore Michelle Coalwell improved upon her PR in the 400 clocking in at 56.33.

Stephanie Smith, who tied her season best in the shot put for a second place, won the discus on her final throw.

Oregon sprinter Laurie Williams finished third in the 100, one-tenth of a second behind Nebraska's Prema Govindan, but her time of 12.14 is her fastest of the year.



Trainers examine the ankle of Kamala Kohlmeier after she hit a hurdle en route to winning the 100-meter hurdles.



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