

Men could challenge for title Strengths in distances

By Ashley Conklin
Emerald Sports Reporter

Don't be too surprised if Oregon men's track coach Bill Dellinger brings home his second national championship team this weekend.

After finishing fourth at last year's NCAA Championships, the Ducks are primed to make a run for the team title at this year's NCAA meet, which kicks off Wednesday and runs through Saturday at the Duke University campus in Durham, N.C.

Although Dellinger won't come out and say it, Oregon could be ready to dethrone defending champ Louisiana State and try and outdistance the rest of the team favorites which includes sprint-strong Florida and Texas A&M.

"All I know about the NCAA meet is what I read," Dellinger said. "They say that Florida, Louisiana State and Texas A&M and ourselves are the leading contenders in the NCAA. I just want our guys to go out and compete like they're capable of."

If the Ducks do indeed compete as they are capable, the Pacific-10 Conference champs should be in the thick of the battle. Oregon has 14 qualifiers

for this year's meet and three of them — hammer thrower Scott McGee, decathlete Pedro daSilva and Danny Lopez in the 3,000-meter steeplechase — are strong favorites to win individual titles.

The Ducks will also be riding a surge of momentum into the NCAA meet which could help them.

Oregon easily rolled over the competition at the Pac-10 meet almost two weeks ago, and six of the Ducks' 14 qualifiers have met NCAA standards in the last two weeks.

Dellinger said that winning the Pac-10 title could really help Oregon at the NCAA meet.

"I think the Pac-10 meet shows a truer test of a track team than the NCAA meet where you can win with four or five outstanding athletes," he said. "I think the Pac-10 Conference is the toughest track conference in the nation."

According to *Track & Field News*, it appears the Southeastern Conference is the toughest conference in the nation with LSU and Florida going 1-2 in its pre-meet form chart followed by Texas A&M, Oregon, UCLA, Arkansas and Baylor.

But most of LSU, Florida and Texas A&M's points will come in the sprints while the Ducks

will counter with distance strength in the 1,500, steeplechase and 10,000 meters. Scoring is given for the top eight places on a 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis, and with the Tigers, Gators and Aggies taking points away from one another in the sprints, Oregon might be able to emerge as the top team.

Although daSilva and McGee are not sure-fire winners, they stand a good chance of easily winning their events.

DaSilva was the Pac-10 and NCAA runner-up last season, and has been the NCAA favorite since the beginning of the season. DaSilva won the Pac-10 title this year and earlier scored an NCAA-leading 7,818 points at the Oregon Invitational.

The only concern the Ducks have is whether daSilva can overcome a twisted knee suffered while competing in the open pole vault competition at the Pac-10 meet.

"With Pedro, we can't afford to have him out because there's 10 points right there," Dellinger said.

But the decathlon competition will not get under way until Friday, and daSilva should be ready to go with almost two weeks of rest.

Like daSilva, McGee has been the favorite since the beginning of the season in the

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Photo by Martin Thiel

Pedro daSilva, who took the Pac-10 championship in the decathlon, is the favorite to take the national title in the NCAA championships, beginning today in Durham, N.C.

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