

Duck women looking for respect in NCAAs

Fewer athletes, but more experience

By Cam Sivesind
Emerald Sports Reporter

Tom Heinonen has a simple goal for the Oregon women's track team at the NCAA championships: A reinstatement of the Ducks as a force to reckon with in track and field.

Oregon, which had finished in the top 10 nine out of the previous 10 years, fell hard last year with a tie for 42nd place.

The climb back is a long one, but the reinstatement Heinonen is looking for is not first or second, or even in the top 10.

"I want to show we have class athletes that can compete at the national level," Heinonen said.

Five points was all the Ducks could muster in last year's NCAA meet. Though Heinonen is taking fewer athletes to Durham, N.C., the site of this year's meet, he expects to score more points.

"If we could go 10 or 15 (points), it would jump us up incredibly," Heinonen said. "If we can score 20, it could get us in the top 15."

The Ducks do have an advantage in the experience department. Of the six athletes making the trip east, four carry with them NCAA meet experience from last year or the year before.

Senior Liz Wilson scored four of the Ducks' five points last year with seventh place finishes in the 3,000 and 5,000 meter races. Wilson will likely run in only one event this year — 5,000.

Wilson sat out last fall's cross country season because of injuries. Once again, injuries are hampering the Maryland native.

A hip flexor strain had been the problem going

into the Pacific-10 Conference championships last week in Seattle. Wilson won the 5,000 and the flexor felt fine, but now a nearby muscle is the source of her latest pain.

"Liz has been limping along in training for over a week now," Heinonen said. "She's getting better and will be ready to go for the NCAA meet."

This will be Wilson's third appearance at the NCAA championships, having placed 11th in the 5,000 in 1988 as well.

The javelin could be the event Oregon scores big in this year. Junior Paula Berry and sophomore Kim Hyatt return to the NCAAs after former appearances. Hyatt grabbed the Ducks final point last year with an eighth place finish.

Berry, who waited until the Pac-10 championships to unleash a qualifying throw of 178-1, failed to qualify for last year's NCAA meet after having done so her freshman year. The 1990 Pac-10 champ currently has the third longest throw in the nation among collegians this year.

Hyatt surprised everyone last year with her showing at the NCAA meet. Her eighth place finish earned her all-American honors, and the Prineville native hopes to repeat as an all-American. Her best effort this year of 177-9 ranks her in a tie for fourth in the country at the collegiate level.

"Kim is consistent, and Paula had a huge milestone last week," Heinonen said. "That was the best single throw and series ever for Paula."

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Photo by Martin Thiel

After missing qualifying for the NCAAs her sophomore year, Junior Paula Berry returns for her second NCAA appearance in three years.

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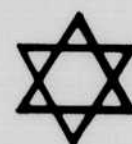
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