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**◀ CROSS COUNTRY PREVIEW ▶**



Liz Wilson



Stephanie Wessell



Colin Dalton

**Runners head to championships**

By Robert Weber  
 Emerald Sports Reporter

Oregon's men's and women's cross country teams will put their national rankings on the line Saturday afternoon when they compete in the Pacific-10 Conference Championships at Stanford University.

The women's team, ranked sixth nationally, hopes to regain the conference title that it lost for the first time ever last season. The women's squad won the first three Pac-10 titles before finishing third last year behind Washington and Washington State.

The Ducks are considered the heavy favorite for the meet, which is to be run over a 5,000-meter course on the University Golf Course, but Coach Tom Heinonen isn't worried about the pressure.

"We're going to win, as I see it, unless we're nowhere as good as we think we are," Heinonen said.

"We feel that the Pac-10 is rightfully ours and we're determined that it's supposed to stay ours," he said. "This is the first step in our championship meet series, and I feel that we're ready."

Seniors Liz Wilson and Stephanie Wessell enter the race as pre-meet favorites to claim individual honors. Neither Wessell, who finished eighth in last year's meet, nor Wilson, the 1988 Pac-10 champion, have lost to an opposing collegian this season.

The two have taken turns finishing first and second in the Ducks' three meets this year. Wilson won the Emerald City Invitational in Seattle and the GBS/Nike Invitational in Minneapolis, Minn., with Wessell a close second each time. Wessell captured first at the Jeff Drenth Memorial in Eugene two weeks ago.

Wilson, who missed the entire 1989 season due to a leg injury, has surprised Heinonen with strong performances so early in the season.

"I've been pleasantly surprised with Liz Wilson's ability to come on so quickly," Heinonen said.

Rounding out the Ducks' entries will be red-shirt freshman Julia Saul, sophomores Carol Holmen and Nicole Woodward and juniors Lisa Karnopp and Lucy Nusrala.

Wessell stressed the importance of this weekend's meet for both the team and Heinonen.

"The Pac-10 meet is for bragging rights in the conference," Wessell said, "and it's important to win for Tom because he feels that it belongs to us. The meet has taken on an extra measure of importance this year."

While the women's team is heading into this weekend's meet at full strength, the same cannot be said about the men's team.

Men's coach Bill Dellinger feels confident about his team's chances this weekend but is quick to add that his team is not at full strength due to Rick Mestler's sore arch. Mestler, the Ducks' No. 4 runner, has missed five days of workouts and is questionable for Saturday's 8,000-meter race.

"We're still a pretty good team," Dellinger said, "but our chances would be better with Rick."

"It's going to be a real interesting Pac-10 meet, but I think it will come down to Arizona, Washington and Oregon," he said.

The sixth-ranked Ducks have surprised many coaches across the country, but not Dellinger. Despite losing six out of seven members from last year's NCAA runner-up team, Dellinger didn't expect to spend an entire year rebuilding.

"I'm not surprised at all with our performance so far," Dellinger said. "We've got some good runners and some good depth."

Dellinger said that juniors Colin Dalton and Pat Haller, the only Ducks with Pac-10 Championship experience, are expected to play key roles if Oregon is to come out on top.

"If Dalton and Haller are competitive with Marc Davis and Brian Gosso (Arizona's top two runners) and the rest of our team can close the gap behind our top runners to less than a minute, we could have a chance to win," Dellinger said.

Dalton, who hails from Sydney, Australia, has enjoyed a great deal of success since returning to Oregon from a year of international running. He has finished second in each of the Ducks' last two meets and placed 12th in the Pac-10 meet as a freshman in 1988.

The Ducks' remaining five entries demonstrate the youth of this team. Junior Shannon Lemora joins Dalton and Haller as the elder statesmen of the team while freshman Andy Maris and sophomores Colden Baxter, Tye Van Schoiack and Mestler round out the pack. Freshman Coley Candale will be used if Mestler is unable to go.

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