

SPORTS

Cross country teams headed back to NCAAs

By Jake Berg
Emerald Sports Reporter

Oregon's cross country teams now have but one hurdle to jump before turning a good season into a great one.

Yet to lose a meet this fall, the women survived fifth-ranked Cal-Irvine by a point for first place at the regionals, and a third-place finish at Fresno for the men's team sets them up for the national meet Nov. 19 at Knoxville, Tenn.

Teams finishing in the top three automatically advance to the NCAA meet.

Seniors Liz Wilson and Stephanie Wessell and sophomore Nicole Woodward placed in the top 10 at the regionals to lead the Pacific-10 Conference champion Ducks past the Big West Conference champs by a slim 49-50 score.

"I'm really happy with our performance this week-

end," said Coach Tom Heinonen. "Their goal was to focus in and meet the challenge this weekend, and they did."

Wilson and Wessell, who had not lost to a collegiate runner previous to the Region VIII race, finished third and sixth, respectively, over the 5,000-meter course, and Woodward landed in ninth place.

Buffy Rabbitt, the UC-Irvine runner who took first at the regionals a year ago, successfully defended her title Saturday with another top performance. Rabbitt ran nine seconds better than last year's time to best the individual field. Second-place Bridget Smyth of Arizona ran in 16:47.7 to Rabbitt's winning run of 16:44.8, and Wilson clocked in at 16:50.2 for third.

Sixth place at Fresno has become accustomed to Wessell; she took sixth at the meet last November and also on Saturday, but managed to knock 13 seconds off her time from last fall. Wessell completed the course in 17:03.5 this weekend.

Other Ducks' times included Woodward at ninth in 17:14.3 (almost 40 seconds better than her 1989 run), junior Lucy Nusrala ran 17:24.4 for 12th place, and sophomore Carol Holmen's 19th place was timed at 17:41.4.

Heinonen had taken a team to the NCAA Championships every year since 1975 until last fall's squad failed to make the cut. The coach said he felt relieved that next week will mark Oregon's return to form.

"It's great to be taking a team back to nationals," said Heinonen. "We're ready for the NCAAs, no doubt in my mind."

The regional meet had men's Coach Bill Dellinger hoping that the absence of junior Colin Dalton, Oregon's top runner this season, would have little effect on the Ducks.

Dellinger scratched Dalton off the list of his runners

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took the lead at 12-11. Washington then tied the game at 12-12 and pulled away to win the first game.

The Ducks got the momentum going in game two and got out to an 8-4 lead. It was a hard-fought battle after that.

The Huskies tied the game at 12-12 and the Ducks tied it again at 13-13, but Oregon came away winning the second game and tying the match at 1-1.

Both teams exchanged the lead a few times in the third game, but like the first game, the Huskies took control and didn't look back to grab a 2-1 edge in the match.

The Ducks answered back in the fourth game, jumping out

Pac-10 Volleyball				
Team	W	L	Pct.	GB
UCLA	15	0	1.000	—
Stanford	14	2	.875	1½
Oregon St.	10	6	.625	5½
Arizona	8	9	.471	8
USC	7	8	.467	8
Arizona St.	7	10	.412	9
Oregon	6	10	.375	9½
Washington St.	6	10	.375	9½
Washington	5	11	.313	10½
California	2	14	.125	13½

however, pulled away for the final time, rattling off three in a row to win the match.

"The match could have gone either way," Oregon Coach Gerry Gregory said. "There were some breaks that went to both teams at different times. It was one of the most exciting volleyball matches that I've ever been associated with."

Watkins had a match-high 19 kills while Oregon setter Molly McGrath led everyone in digs with 35. Outside hitter Michelle Reid led the Huskies with 15 kills and 25 digs.

"I think that everybody performed well," Gregory said. "It was definitely a great team effort and although we came out on the losing end, I almost feel like we won tonight."

to a 9-2 lead before squandering the lead as the Huskies pulled to within 12-11. The Ducks forced a fifth game by running off three straight points.

After trading many sideouts early in the fifth game, both teams stayed close to each other. The game remained this way; tied several times, including a 12-12 tie. The Huskies,

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based near Dusseldorf making its first tour of the United States, went on a 19-3 run against Oregon's bench in the final six minutes, led by Rimas Kurtinaitis, who had 13 of his 16 first-half points during the run.

Kurtinaitis, a member of the Soviet National Team, was a headache all day for the Ducks. The 6-5, 30-year-old guard finished the game with 36 points on 11-24 shooting and had five assists despite constant hounding by Mixon and freshman forward Jordy Lyden.

Mixon, the Ducks' senior shooting guard, was dealt

the difficult assignment of guarding Kurtinaitis most of the game and did a much better job than the final stats showed.

"He's a great player," Mixon said, "and they were really setting a tremendous amount of screens out there. They really have an understanding for the game. They not only pick you a lot, but they know how to get him the ball."

Oregon led 85-79 with just under two minutes left. But Kurtinaitis hit a jumper in the key and a desperation three-pointer to pull Brandt-Hagen within one before Mixon and Fife hit free throws to ice it for the Ducks.

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