

Ducks hope to beat weather, UCLA at Pac-10s

By Jake Berg
Emerald Sports Reporter

Oregon's biggest obstacle to winning this weekend's Pacific-10 Conference women's track and field championships might not be the favored UCLA Bruins.

It may be the hot weather.

The Ducks begin the conference championships Saturday in sunny Tempe, Ariz., with the 5:35 p.m. start of the 1,500-meter run.

"The weather is a potential problem," Oregon Coach Tom Heinonen said of the dry conditions. "We haven't seen that kind of weather this year or really ever, but I think we'll do fine. If we don't, though, there's no way that we'll be in the hunt."

Leading the pack in that hunt for the Pac-10 title will be "the big three" of defending conference champion UCLA, Oregon and host Arizona State, Heinonen said.

Following this week's heptathlon competition, Oregon is for first with UCLA with 10 points. The Ducks' Kelly Blair took second place in the

heptathlon, and Kamala Kohlmeier finished fifth.

"UCLA is likely to win by 20 points," Heinonen said. "We're likely to finish 10 or 20 points ahead of Arizona State."

But much of Oregon's finish is dependent upon how Oregon's distance runners perform in their events, and they are the prime candidates to be affected by the warm Arizona temperatures, Heinonen said.

Lucy Nusrala, who ran the third-fastest 5,000 time in conference history last week, is scheduled to run the 3,000 meters. Erika Klein will run the 800, Lisa Karnopp and Carol Holmen will run the 1,500, and Julia Saul, Nicole Woodward and Stephanie Wessell will compete in the 10,000.

If they feel ready to run again, Nusrala, Karnopp, Saul, Woodward and Wessell may all compete in the 5,000 Sunday.

"We may have nobody in the 5,000; we may have five," Heinonen said. "Depending on the entries, the 5,000 could be a good chance for a Pac-10 title."

Wessell, the defending Pac-10 champ in the 10,000, will again be in the 10,000 field, but a sore knee may keep her from competing in the 5,000, where she placed third at the Pac-10s last season.

"We're going for broke in those events as we had thought we might early on," Heinonen said. "Whether it's going to make a difference or not, I don't know."

Although the heat may hinder the distance runners, Heinonen said it will certainly boost the performance of the Pac-10 sprinters.

"This is where sprinters run fast — conference meet, warm weather, the wind's going to blow the right way," he said.

In those ideal conditions, Rosie Williams, the school-record holder in the 100 and 200, could run a season best during those two events, Heinonen said.

"Rosie is the most likely person to run her way into the NCAA meet," he said. "In fact, this is clearly her best chance, and I think she'll do it."

Freshman Camara Jones and Kim Hutson will run the 400, but Oregon will not field a 4x100-meter relay team because the runners will need to rest up for other events. Oregon will have a 4x400 relay team, featuring Williams, Jones, Hutson and Klein.

Jumping for the Ducks will be Kim Carlisle and Marci Yule in the triple jump, and Laurel Roberts and Kelly Blair in the high jump and the long jump.

Saturday's main event of the championships may be the javelin throw, which pits four of this season's top collegiate throwers in the nation.

Oregon's Paula Berry, defending Pac-10 champ and the owner of the country's best collegiate toss this year, will face off with Arizona's Louise Perreault, who has the second-best collegiate throw this season. Oregon's Kim Hyatt, who has the fourth-best collegiate throw this year and defending NCAA champion Ashley Selman of USC will also contend for the title.

HAMMER

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Togher coaches not only the Duck throwers, but also some of the nation's top post-collegians such as Lance Deal and Jim Driscoll, who live and train year-round with Togher in Eugene.

Togher said what is really being developed is a school of hammer throwers in this country. Togher is trying to develop an American school of hammer

throwers, the external factors sometimes interfere with the goal.

"It's very difficult to look at the long term," Togher said. "It can take nine to 11 years to really learn the hammer. That's a lot to ask for in this fast society because you're giving up a big amount of time."

"It all depends on external factors," he said. "If you suddenly say a guy has this chance at a job, you can see that he has to think about taking it because

there's money there and a chance to earn a living, because we don't have a sports system like Europe does, where in the Eastern cell it is state-supported and run."

That's also one of the big problems McGee sees with American track and field. While sprint stars like Carl Lewis and Michael Johnson can demand huge shoe contracts and meet appearance fees, very little money is left over to the events that need to be devel-

oped.

"It's important to develop that sport all the way through," McGee said. "It's really irritating and frustrating and really hard to develop those areas (like the hammer) if there isn't any money left over."

Before trying to worry about making a living and continuing his hammer career, there are other, more immediate concerns for McGee, such as defending his Pac-10 and NCAA crowns.

He'll take the first step Saturday at the Pac-10 meet in Tempe, Ariz., where he has the best conference throw by more than 18 feet this season. Then it's back to his familiar ring south of Hayward Field for the NCAA Championships May 29-June 1, where he'll try to beat Southern Methodist's Christophe Elle, who owns the collegiate-best mark of 234-8.

Even when he graduates from Oregon, he'll be back in school — Togher's hammer school.

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