

SPORTS



Photo by Andre Kaniers
Oregon's Bob Gray advanced to Friday's semifinals in the 400-meter hurdles.

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ly kick over the last 150 meters to squeeze into third place at 8:40.36, just behind Ohio State's Mark Croghan (8:40.07) and Texas' Noyes Livingston (8:40.31). Mestler held on for fourth in 8:40.68. Both times were personal records for the two Ducks.

Van Schoiack qualified for the NCAA meet by running an 8:42.99 PR at last week's Les Steers/Last Chance Open at Hayward Field. Van Schoiack said he's hoping to follow a precedent set by former Duck Harold Kuphaldt, who finished sixth at the 1984 NCAA meet at Hayward Field.

"Harold Kuphaldt PRed at a last chance meet, PRed in the (NCAA) prelims, and then PRed in the finals," he said. "It wouldn't bother me to follow that Oregon precedent."

"The pace was fast and with 200 to go, I kind of dropped back ... and then realized, 'you can get those guys.' I was in sixth, so I knew I had to get two," to finish in the top four to automatically advance to the finals.

Skipper, who hasn't had the best of seasons because of a badly sprained left ankle, was able to make the javelin finals with a best of 218-11, making the finals as the eighth-best qualifier.

Skipper said afterward that his ankle is even worse now than earlier in the season.

"The secondary tendon is so inflamed, when I plant, it pinches the nerves in there and sometimes it starts bleeding," Skipper said. "It's something that takes six months to heal."

The plant is 85 percent of the javelin throw, Skipper said, and that's why he hasn't come anywhere close to his 246-5 PR of last season.

"This season's been real frustrating," Skipper said. "The ankle, it's really messed up. I'll just get some deadner or pain killers on Friday. I just want to score."

One javelin thrower who won't have any problem scoring is Texas' Patrik Boden, the defending NCAA champ.

Boden took only one of his allotted three throws, tossing 261-10 to break the Hayward Field record of 261-0 set by Brian Crouser in 1989.

Boden does know something about injuries, having come back from right shoulder and right ankle surgery in December.

Boden's first competition was May 7 when he threw 267-10 at Shizukoa, Japan, the same competition Finland's Seppo Raty set the current world record of 301-9.

The NCAA meet is only Boden's third of the year. He said he does feel a bit behind in his training.

"I'm about a month or two behind in my technique," he said. "(But) from a strength standpoint, I feel even stronger than a year ago."

Although Wright, an all-American in the 400 hurdles a year ago, wasn't able to finish his race Wednesday, Gray came through with the ninth-fastest time of the day in 51.23.

Gray finished fourth in his heat and said a big reason for that was that he went out faster than planned because his steps were off.

"My steps, actually I had 13 through three (hurdles) before I got messed up," he said.

The gusting winds at the end of the race didn't help either.

"I came around the corner and the last 150 (meters), it was pretty ugly," Gray said. "I was just hoping I could finish the race."

Gray will come back today in the 110-meter high hurdle preliminaries.

The top time in the 400 hurdles was turned in by Auburn's Samuel Matete, a junior college transfer from Blinn Community College in Brenham, Texas.

Matete, a member of the 1988 Zambian Olympic team, clocked 49.11, the best by a collegian this season but below his PR of 47.91.

"I wanted to run fast," said Matete, who didn't consider the rain a factor. "I just wanted to see what I could do."

Not only did the time come in bad conditions, but Matete wasn't even challenged in his heat.

"In good conditions, I can 48 anything," he said. "Anything in the 48s would be fine. I know I can do it."

Chicken pox couldn't stop Arkansas sprinter

By Lyle Crouse
Emerald Contributor

After a season hindered by a bout with the chicken pox, it seemed appropriate for Arkansas sprinter Jimmy French to be under the weather for the opening day of the NCAA Track & Field Championships.

French turned in a 20.84 performance in the 200-meter dash to advance to Friday night's semifinals, despite battles with sinus and allergy problems.

French finished just behind North Carolina State's Kevin Braunskill in the second heat, and he claimed the fifth-best

time of the day behind Braunskill, Texas Christian's Horatio Porter, Frank Fredericks of Brigham Young, and West Virginia's James Ilett.

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But such success looked doubtful for the Razorback sophomore only a short time ago.

"He had the chicken pox after the second outdoor meet, and it put him quite a bit behind in practice," Arkansas Coach John McDonnell said of French.

"Just think — you miss school one week, you miss practice two weeks," French said of his experience with the chicken pox.

French was forced to devote all of his time to regaining ground on the track and in the classroom while trying to find time for his wife Trisha and their three children: Marcus, 4; Robin, 2; and Ashley, 1.

The times when French was unable to be with his family were the worst part of his ordeal.

"How do you tell a little boy, 'I can't take you to the park. I have to study'?" he said.

But all of French's hard work paid off when he captured the Southwestern Conference title in the 200, and he entered this week's championships with the top qualifying time of 20.20. And he's earned the respect of his coach.

"If there was an 'Outstanding Young Man' award, he'd get it," McDonnell said. "He's got his head right on his shoulders, and I hope he keeps it there."

McDonnell is also proud of French's composure on the track.

"He's got a great temperament in his races," he said.

"He just does his job."

French has overcome a lot of adversity on his journey to the collegiate track championships, but he doesn't accept all the credit for his accomplishments. He credits the support of his family, especially his wife Trisha.

And a great performance in the NCAA Championships this week would make a good gift for Jimmy and Trisha's June 13 anniversary.

"She plays a big part in my life," he said. "If it wasn't for her, there wouldn't be a Jimmy French."

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