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## CROSS COUNTRY PREVIEW

# Team in position to repeat title

By Erick Studenicka  
Emerald Contributor

Last year, with only one runner returning from his 1989 squad, Oregon men's cross country Coach Bill Dellinger declared in the pre-season press guide that the 1990 season would be a rebuilding year.

As it turned out, Dellinger's prediction for a "rebuilding" season was slightly understated as the Ducks captured the Pacific-10 Conference title and finished fifth at the NCAA Championship meet.

This year, with five of the top seven runners from last year's squad returning, it's easy for fans and experts alike to predict a fourth straight Pac-10 title for the Ducks. About the only person who isn't predicting a title for the Ducks is Dellinger himself, who is not about to let his team become complacent.



Pat Haller

"Sure, we have most of our team returning," Dellinger said, "but Washington has added some and Washington State is always tough. It's too early to say how the season will progress."

What we have to do is work hard in practice. Then we should be fairly successful in the late season meets."

Besides the Pac-10 competition, Dellinger is worried about the health of his number one runner of a year ago, Pat Haller. Haller, who became an All-American last year with his 16th place in the NCAA meet, developed a stress fracture over the summer and is not expected to run in the early season meets.

In Haller's absence, Dellinger will be looking for veterans Colin Dalton (second place in the 1990 Pac-10 meet), Tye Van Schoiack, Andy Maris (ninth place in the 1990 District VIII Meet), and Rick Mestler to pick up the slack.

In addition to his returning NCAA meet runners, Dellinger will be counting on Coley Candaele (30th in the 1990 Pac-10 meet), Mike Shannon and Alan Foster for the depth necessary to make a run at the NCAA championship.

Freshman Tracy Hollister, the 1991 Oregon high school cross country champion, is the team's top recruit, but he will have difficulty cracking the top seven of such a veteran squad.

Another runner who has a chance to make the top seven is John Damoff, a transfer from Washington. After sitting out a year because of the transfer, Damoff said he is eager for the season to begin.

Women's Coach Tom Heinonen is also anticipating another successful season as he welcomes back five members of the Ducks' 1990 fifth-place NCAA team. In addition to the returnees, the Ducks have added the strength of Melody Fairchild, arguably the top prep female runner in history.

Although she has never run a collegiate race, Fairchild should be one of the team's top runners. At age 18, she brings with her from Boulder, Colo., two national cross country titles and a third place finish in the World Junior Championships.

On the track, Fairchild was the national two-mile champion, clocking the first sub-10-minute high school time in history. Fairchild chose Oregon over several other scholarship offers due to Oregon's traditionally strong distance program and Eugene's city atmosphere, which she believes is similar to Boulder.

Heinonen emphasized that the Ducks have other talented runners besides Fairchild, however.

"We have a strong group of returning athletes this season, including Lucy Nusrata, Nicole Woodward, Lisa Karnopp, Carol Holmen and Erika Klein," Heinonen said.

Although unlikely that the Ducks will be able to match Liz Wilson and Stephanie Wessell's one-two finish of a year ago in the Pac-10 meet (both graduated last year), Heinonen said he believes this year's team may be just as good.

Both the men's and women's teams will open their season at the Emerald City Invitational in Seattle on Saturday. The only home meet will be the Drenth Memorial Meet to be held Oct. 19.



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