

Women favored for cross country title

By Dave Charbonneau
Emerald Sports Reporter

The biggest question facing the third-ranked Oregon women's cross country team at the Pacific-10 Conference Championships Saturday is not whether it can take the team crown but rather which one of its runners will win the individual crown.

Oregon is the odds-on favorite to take the team title for the fifth time in six years at the 5,000-meter meet held at Stanford Golf Course in Palo Alto.

"I don't see anybody getting close to us," coach Tom Heinonen said. "We're ready to roll, and I don't look at there being a possibility of us letting up."

Senior Lucy Nusrala will be the probable favorite in the race, and her stiffest competition should come from her own teammates, sophomore Nicole Woodward and senior Lisa Karnopp.

Nusrala has finished first in all three meets the Ducks have participated in this season and has showed no signs of giving up that position.

"It's been by chance I've come out on top in our meets this year," Nusrala said. "I've just felt good on race days."

Woodward has finished second to Nusrala in two of the meets and finished fourth in the other meet of the season.

Karnopp completes the deadly trio as she has had two third-place finishes and a fourth-place finish this year.

Any one of the three could win the meet with a good outing.

"I don't want to make a big deal out of this," Heinonen said, "but one of our runners will probably win the Pac-10 individual championship."

Junior Carol Holmen has had a firm hold on the fourth position for the Ducks all season. Heinonen said he is pleased with the way Holmen has run this year.

"Holmen has been the most pleasant surprise of the year,"



Photo by Jeff Paslay

Lucy Nusrala (far left) and Nicole Woodward (far right) lead the Duck runners into Saturday's Pac-10 championships.

he said. "She's getting better with every race. She just keeps closing in on our top three runners."

The final three positions will be filled by freshmen Jill Callero and Jenna Carlson and sophomore Monica Davidson. Carlson and Callero have battled for the fifth and sixth spots on the team, and Davidson claimed the seventh spot two weekends ago at the Jeff Drenth Memorial.

Heinonen said he thought experience with the course at the Stanford Invitational earlier this season would help Callero and Carlson.

"Both have seen the Stanford course and should run better," he said.

The two runners agreed. "I feel much, much more comfortable," Callero said. "Last time, I had heard all these stories about the course

and I felt a little scared. This time, I'm excited to get out there and attack it."

"I'm excited because I will know where I'm going," Carlson said. "Last time someone told me there were 800 meters left, and there was really like a mile left."

Heinonen said he would like to see one of the runners move up on the top four.

"Our number five runner needs to close the gap on our top four, but that could be tough with two freshmen and an inexperienced sophomore," he said.

The Ducks have won the Pac-10 championship four of the five years the meet has existed.

Last year, Liz Wilson and Stephanie Wessell finished first and second as the Ducks won the team title. Woodward finished eighth for Oregon and Karnopp and Holmen helped

the Duck cause with 24th and 25th finishes, respectively.

Heinonen said this year's team is better than last year's because they have three runners doing the same thing two runners did last year.

"Based on every indication we've got, we're stronger up front," he said. "We've got three running the same times as two did last year. I'm quite sure we're better than last year."

The only team that could even come close to competing with the Ducks is 19th-ranked Arizona.

Heinonen said it is pretty obvious what this meet means as far as the upcoming regionals and nationals are concerned.

"This meet stands on its own," he said. "It's a trophy in the trophy case; a bit of history. We obviously want to win it, but we've definitely got bigger fish to fry."

Teammates balancing competition, friendship

By Dave Charbonneau
Emerald Sports Reporter

Call them the Three Musketeers. Call them the Three Amigas. Call them any other cheesy nickname associated with a dynamic trio.

They are Lucy Nusrala, Nicole Woodward and Lisa Karnopp, and they are the leading force behind the third-ranked Oregon women's cross country team.

The three have been unbeatable this year, claiming three of the top four spots in all three of the Ducks' meets this year. In each race they have finished within 20 seconds of each other, leading Oregon to two first-place and one second-place finish this season.

Woodward and Nusrala both said it scares other teams to see three runners from the same team up front.

"With the three of us in front, it's really helpful because I think we're threatening to other teams," said Woodward.

Nusrala agreed. "When people see three runners from the same team, it's intimidating," she said.

Karnopp said she likes the fact that they can help each other out during the race.

"During the races, we'll communicate with each other and it makes it a more comfortable situation," she said.

Communication is important between the three on and off the course. They all stressed the fact that despite the competition, they are all good friends.

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