

CROSS COUNTRY PROFILE

RUNNERS

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"We're really good friends off the course," Karnopp said. "I think that's why we've been able to communicate so well when we're running."

"The three of us get along actually better than I thought we would," Nusrala said. "We're all competitive but we can joke about it. If we can talk about it, it makes the situation a lot more comfortable."

So far this year, Nusrala has been very comfortable as the mainstay in the top position for the Ducks. She is undefeated in three meets this year.

Nusrala, a senior, graduated from Crescent Valley High in Corvallis and enrolled at Notre Dame before coming to Oregon midway through her sophomore year.

She said she went to Notre Dame because her dad and brother had gone there and because of its reputation, but despite its lack of a strong track program.

"After my fall term my sophomore year I realized I wasn't where I wanted to be," she said.

Last year, Nusrala was "in the middle" of the cross country team but started to take off last spring.

"I really picked up the pace last year in track," she added.

Karnopp is also a senior who is competing in her final term of eligibility, and so far this year, she has taken two third places and a fourth place.

She graduated from Mountain View High School in Bend and came straight to Oregon.

Karnopp said that she wasn't near the runner in high school that she is now, and she gives coach Tom Heinonen a lot of credit for the success she and the team has had.

"The most remarkable thing about this team is that me, Lucy and Nicole are all from Oregon high schools," Karnopp said. "To Tom's credit, he took three Oregon high school runners and made a great team. With all the fancy recruiting that goes on, it proves that Tom's program really works."

Woodward, a junior from West Linn, is the youngest of the three.

She finished a second behind Nusrala in the first meet of the season, finished fourth in the following race, and took a close second two weeks ago.

Woodward had a strong season last year that was capped off with an eighth-place finish at the Pac-10 championships.

With the Pac-10 meet Saturday and regionals and nationals right around the corner, Woodward looked toward team success rather than individual goals.

"I would like to see us go 1-2-3 at the Pac-10s and regionals, and then have the three of us get All-American honors," she said.

Nusrala also has lofty goals, but she said she likes to look at things realistically.

"I would like to be an All-American," she said. "I think that's reasonable, and maybe I should shoot for top 15 or top 10, but I really don't know who's out there, so I don't like to talk a lot."

This season, no one seemed really sure just how well the Ducks would do after losing last year's stars Liz Wilson and



Lucy Nusrala

Stephanie Wessell. All three said they didn't feel much pressure of filling their shoes.

"We all ran real well last spring," Karnopp said. "So I don't think there was any pressure."

"We had no idea we would be ranked third in the nation,"

Nusrala said, "but this year there's three of us at the front as opposed to two."

As the season rolls on, each meet becomes more important and the competition becomes tougher. Karnopp said it will be interesting to see how the runners respond when they are challenged by tougher individuals.

"We need to be prepared to run our own race," she said. "Last year, Lucy dropped out of the Pac-10 race early, and Nicole and I were lost. Tom keeps reminding us to run our own races in the meets coming up."

The three runners may be used to running in a tight group, but in the end, they all are out to win.

Woodward summed up the way the three feel.

"We all go out trying to win, but I think no matter which one of us wins, the other two will be happy."

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