

Women runners head to NCAAs once again

By Dave Charbonneau
Emerald Sports Reporter

Last weekend, the Oregon women's cross country team qualified for the NCAA Championships, which came as no surprise to coach Tom Heinonen.

After all, he's guided the Ducks to NCAA appearances in 15 of the 16 years the women's national meet has been held.

The Ducks again visit the national race Monday at Arizona.

But all those trips to the NCAAs are only part of the statistics the team has accumulated over the years.

Oregon has won two national championships, finished in the top three teams six times, won the Region-VIII championship 12 out of 16 years, and has had numerous individual Pacific-10 Conference and Region-VIII

champions.

Add to that one statistic that Heinonen is very proud of.

"We are the only school to win two NCAA championships with two totally separate teams," he said proudly. "There are other teams who have won two titles, but we're the only school to have won with 14 totally different runners."

The only year the Ducks

failed to qualify for the NCAA meet was in 1989, when Oregon finished fourth at regionals.

"In 1989 when we didn't qualify, I was real shocked," Heinonen said.

Heinonen seems to have a knack for recruiting women mostly from the state of Oregon who will be strong collegiate runners.

"The best high school runners are not always the top col-

legians," he said. "I've been successful with less developed runners."

He thinks many top high school runners are possibly overtrained.

"The top runners are usually heavily trained and can't adapt to different ways of training," Heinonen said. "A lot of them have worked awfully damn hard to get where they are, but there's nothing left."

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OLIVER

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ception.

A week before the Stanford game, Oliver had himself another big day at Washington, intercepting a pass and blocking another punt.

"I told (special teams) coach (Nick) Aliotti when I got here, that I was going to block six kicks here, and I have five so far," Oliver said.

The senior will get a chance to block his sixth in Saturday's Civil War game, his final game as a Duck. Oliver's career has been eventful this season to say the least, but the length of his tenure at Oregon has been short.

Oliver transferred from Arizona's Glendale Junior College to Oregon in January 1990, but last fall's junior year for Oliver was cut short by a knee injury halfway through the season.

Along with Oregon, Oliver paid recruiting visits to Texas A&M, Missouri, North Carolina State and Fresno State, but offers came from other schools such as Oklahoma, Houston, Arizona and Arizona State.

Oregon's football program got Oliver, and so did the Duck track program. Oliver stood out more on last year's track team than he did on the football field, placing fourth at the NCAA Championships in the decathlon.

It's Oliver's all-around athleticism that has attracted the attention of a number of NFL scouts. He said he knows the Denver Broncos, New York Giants and Los Angeles Rams have all shown interest in possibly drafting him.

Oregon defensive coordinator Denny Schuler has coached a number of defensive backs who have gone on to the NFL, including Thom Kaumeyer, Anthony Newman and Chris Oldham.

"He certainly ranks in athletic ability with Newman, Oldham and Kaumeyer," Schuler said. "Time is on his side because I think some of these other kids blossomed earlier."

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