

Duck riders kick off year in dominating fashion

Washington State hosted 10 teams from schools in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana over the weekend by staging a two-day, three-race event to kick off the Northwest collegiate cycling season.

The Oregon contingent, consisting of five men and three women, traveled to Pullman with high hopes and a well-prepared, ambitious squad.

In the opening event, a short course criterion in the center of the Washington State campus, the Duck women set the precedent with senior Jennifer Vendetti taking first place in the 40-minute-plus, two-lap event.

In the hotly contested men's race, the Oregon riders continued to show their dominance by placing three riders in the top 10, including junior Jon Bridenbaugh's first-place finish in the 55-plus, four-lap race.

Saturday evening's team time trial saw the schools pitted against each other in a race against the clock over a 20-kilometer course. This event is often called "the race of truth," and the truth was told when the Oregon men's team took top honors in convincing fashion over strong squads from Washington State and Oregon State.

The women's team, lacking the numbers of other schools, rode to a third-place finish. After Saturday's events, Oregon was 20

points ahead of its closest competitors, with Washington State and Oregon State tied for second.

On Sunday, the men faced a hilly, windy 60-mile road race with the women competing on the same course in a 30-mile event.

Vendetti, showing much improved form from last year, finished second to last year's regional champ from Washington. Newcomers Sarah Brown and Gail Smith, both racing for their first time that weekend, finished 10th and 11th, respectively, providing valuable points for the combined men's and women's score.

In the men's race, Oregon planned to ride defensively, and the plan worked perfectly with all five riders placing for points.

The course ended with the riders negotiating a 500-meter, 12-percent grade climb to the finish line with climbing ace Myles Light finishing third, Bridenbaugh in fourth, Luke Pingel in fifth, Matt Fletcher in seventh and Ben Kaplan in 14th place.

The Ducks finished with 208 total points to Washington State's 159 and Oregon State's 107.

With three more races to come, the Oregon team is poised to qualify for nationals in May for the first time since 1989.

Vidlak takes home MVP honors

Senior Dan Vidlak capped his collegiate career by receiving the Howard Wicklund Trophy as Oregon's most valuable wrestler at the annual wrestling awards banquet Sunday night.

Senior Darren Gustafson picked up the John Miller Memorial Award "to be the very best I can"; senior Scott Myers was voted the Jed Kesey-Lorenzo West Memorial Award recipient for being the most improved; and Cory Sonnen was honored with the Most Valuable Freshman Award.

The awards were voted upon by the coaching staff.

Vidlak ended his career as Oregon's fourth-leading all-time wrestler with 100 victories and

was sixth on the career winning percentage at Oregon with an .820 mark. Vidlak, a native of Grants Pass, was a two-time All-American at 118 pounds in 1990 and 1991.

Vidlak, winner of the Wicklund Trophy in 1990, also won the Most Valuable Freshman Award in 1989, the Miller Award in 1991, and the Higdon Trophy as the outstanding sophomore scholar athlete.

Gustafson, a two-time NCAA qualifier from Redlands, Calif., was third on the team in victories with 20 this year and won two matches at the 1992 NCAA Championships.

Myers, a 190 pounder from Newberg, returned to the team after leaving the sport two years ago.

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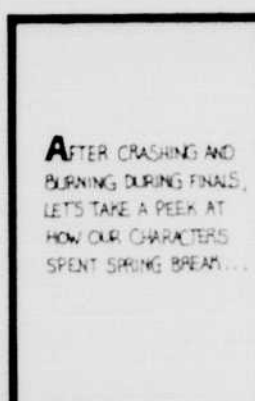
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Oscar the Freshman



Neal Skorpen

Weasel's World



Kraig Norris