

SPORTS

Women runners look for Pac-10 title repeat

□ Oregon stars different people but still strong in javelin and distance events

By Jake Berg
Emerald Sports Editor

Tom Heinonen's goal is for the Oregon women's track team to repeat as the winners of the Pacific-10 Conference Championships.

The 16-year head coach's team will be strong in the same events, but with different people. And unlike last year's conference win at Tempe, Ariz., the Ducks will get a chance to win the title May 22 and 23 at Hayward Field, the first time the women's championships will be held at Oregon's home field.

"The Pac-10 is going to be our goal," Heinonen said. "That's our primary goal. We haven't won a lot of stuff in Eugene. We've won a lot on the road."

As has become expected of traditional Oregon teams, the Ducks should again be strongest in the javelin and longer distance running events when competing in their first dual meet of the season Saturday at Washington.

Ironically, the javelin throw could be Oregon's strongest event this season despite the loss of Paula Berry. Berry, the 1991 NCAA javelin champ, has graduated, but the Ducks shouldn't drop a level in the event.

Senior Kim Hyatt, who has been to the NCAA meet each of her first three years at Oregon, was picked by *Track and Field News* to win the national championship in the event this year. And backing up Hyatt are two of the country's best prep throwers from a year ago, Kelsey Stellick and Keri Esterbrook.

"We'd really like to see the javelin as being our strongest event," Heinonen said.

The longer distance events have also been a strong point of Heinonen's past teams, and that is expected to change little this spring. Gone are Stephanie Wessell and cross country standout Lisa Karnopp, but experienced runners still return for Heinonen.

"We've got enough people returning where I don't think we're going to miss a step at all," he said.

Senior Lucy Nusrala, an



Kim Hyatt

NCAA qualifier last year, will likely run in the 1,500-, 3,000- and 5,000-meter events this season. Fellow senior Nicole Woodward, who was also at the NCAA meet last season, will focus on the 3,000 and has run a provisional qualifying time and personal record 16:24.44 in the 5,000 this season.

Oregon could also get help from freshman Melody Fairchild, who is considered one of the best prep female runners of all time. The Boulder, Colo., native, who holds the prep indoor record in the 3,000, is suffering from a foot injury and may be forced to redshirt this season.

Freshmen Jenna Carlson and Jill Callero, both standouts during the cross country season, will also compete in the longer distance events.

Injuries have also stymied the progress of Heinonen's 800-meter crew. Senior Carol Holmnen, the Pac-10 runner-up in the 800 a year ago, has a stress fracture in her femur and is expected to be out until late April or early May.

In addition, 800 runners Erika Klein and Kim Hutson are recovering from injuries.

"My whole 800-meter group is pretty gimpy this winter," Heinonen said.

Another weak link in his team could be the hurdle events, Heinonen said. Oregon does have freshman Sara Jessie, who has posted the best time at the 100-meter hurdles so far this year, and high jumper Laurel Roberts is trying the event for the first time since high school.

"The 800 and hurdles are a little soft right now, but everywhere else we're pretty darn good," Heinonen said. "We can

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