

Athletes coach kids on benefits of reading

By Peter Alfrey
Emerald Contributor

Johnny can't read, or maybe he just doesn't feel like it.

In an effort to encourage young people to read, the Oregon athletic department has run a program this winter involving Oregon coaches and athletes entitled "Follow the Ducks and Read." The 10-week program, which began on January 24, has been held at Eugene's Jefferson Middle School.

The pilot program has used Duck coaches and athletes from all 14 varsity sports. The program has allowed athletes and coaches to meet with students to give speeches, discussions and to display the benefits of reading. The athletes have even given progress reports throughout the program.

"Basically, we designed the program to utilize student athletes and any resources they may have to encourage students at the middle school level to read," said Eileen Sorensen, the athletic department's director of marketing and promotion.

"This is something that we developed because these student athletes are so important to the kids' impressions, it just gives them more of a reason to read."

By using athletes as teachers and as sources of inspiration, the athletic department feels the young students will be more enthusiastic about read-

ing and more inclined to look at it as something enjoyable, not a chore.

Sorensen said the students and faculty at Jefferson have been very receptive and appreciative of the program, as have the Oregon coaches and student athletes.

"The athletes really like it," Sorensen said. "It's funny because some of them will be nervous when they first go, but once they're there, they come back excited and amazed at how the kids respond to them."

Sorensen says the athletic department has developed the program to get more involved with the community and to give something back to it - other than victories on the playing field. The program allows the athletes to have a relationship with the community that goes beyond athlete and spectator.

Overall, the original intent of making reading more attractive to young people appears to be taking place through the use of the Oregon athletes.

"If (the student's) teacher just came up to them and said 'read,' they wouldn't do it," Sorensen said. "But if they see an athlete doing it, that's why they'll do it."

Although the program has had great success in its infancy, the athletic department is unsure whether the program will continue or not. The program concludes today, but maybe now Johnny can read.

Ducks to face top-ranked Cal

By Steve Mims
Emerald Contributor

The Oregon rugby team faces top-ranked California in the first round of the West Coast Rugby Championships today at 3 p.m. in Los Angeles.

The Ducks finished second in the Northwest League by winning their final three games and then defeating Southern Oregon 8-0 on Saturday to qualify for the tournament.

Eight teams will compete in the three-day, single-elimination tournament with each team playing three games whether they win or lose. The winner of the tournament will advance to the college rugby "Final Four" in Aspen, Colo., next month.

Oregon has been led all season by a strong but average-sized front line which includes Bob Pierce, Dick Dunn, Ian Williams and Steve Knaust. However, that foursome has not faced any team as big as Cal's front line yet this season, a group which features two players taller than 6-foot-5 and weighing around 255 pounds.

"We have to be optimistic," defenseman Mark Rolland said. "They are the best team in the West, so we must play hard. I'm sure no matter what happens, we will learn a lot."

Southern Oregon head coach Mike Thor does not give the Ducks much of a chance to defeat the Bears, but he says if they work to Cal's weaknesses, anything can happen.

"Cal plays straight up and down the field, so Oregon must try to get them to run across the field," Thor said. "An average size team can beat a bigger one if they work to the bigger team's disadvantages. Lungs and hearts get tired if they have to run for long periods of time, so Oregon must make Cal run."

Oregon head coach Bob Snyder knows his team has a stiff challenge ahead of them, but he remains hopeful for an upset.

"All year we have played to the level of our opponents; I hope we can do that against Cal," Snyder said. "The key to the game will be when they score, we cannot get down. Instead, we have to fight back."

Softball team heads to Arizona

The Oregon softball team had better be prepared to handle more than the desert heat this weekend.

The Ducks (15-17 overall, 3-3 Pacific-10 Conference) travel to Arizona for conference double-headers at Arizona State Saturday and against defending national champion and second-ranked Arizona Sunday.

Oregon broke a 10-game los-

ing streak April 3 by sweeping a doubleheader against Oregon State, 3-0 and 5-0.

This weekend's meetings will be the first of the year against both the Sun Devils (21-17 and 1-6) and the Wildcats (40-4 and 5-1).

The Arizona State twin bill gets under way Saturday at 6 p.m., and the Ducks then travel to Tucson for a 1 p.m. doubleheader against Arizona.

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matchup between the two is nearly equal, with the Duck sophomore taking an edge.

Beck has a throw of 48-3 in the shot put this season, and Andrews PRed with a 47-8 earlier this season. Beck's 160-7 in the discus is an NCAA provisional qualifier, and Andrews' 159-7 PR is her best mark this season.

Nicole Woodward has been a star for the Ducks thus far, setting personal records two weeks ago in the 5,000 and in the 3,000 at Washington. The senior will take a run at making three weeks in a row in three different events Saturday, as she will run in the 1,500.

"She ran a lifetime best (in the 3,000) on a day that was pretty crummy," Heinonen said. "The winds were just swirling all over the

place."

The meet will be scored as three separate duals — Oregon/Washington State, Oregon/Minnesota, and Minnesota/Washington State. Heinonen said the Cougars should offer great overall head-to-head competition, but he wasn't sure how the Gophers would match up.

"Minnesota is kind of an unknown quantity, really, because they have some people hurt," he said.

The Duck women will be competing without the men's squad at Hayward for the first time since 1986, as the men travel to Willamette for a non-scoring meet Saturday.

The Oregon men will not likely send the entire team, but several athletes — particularly sprinters and jumpers — will be on the trip. The men will begin a streak of three consecutive home meets next weekend with the Pepsi Team Invitational.

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