Duck duo hopes to rain out Pac-10s

□ Oregon steeplers look to finish 1-2 in conference meet

By Dave Charbonneau **Emerald Sports Reporter**

As the USC track team arrived at Hayward Field for practice Tuesday, the rain began to pour and the thunder began to roll.

While the Trojan athletes looked up to the sky in disgust, Tye Van Scholack and Rick Mestler - soaked to the bone in T-shirts and shorts grinned sheepishly.

I hope it does this on Friday," Mestler said.

Van Scholack nodded in agreement.

As Oregon's steeplechase duo, Van Schoiack and Mestler wili take any advantage they can get when they compete in this weekend's Pacific-10 Conference Championships at Hay-

The two runners own two of the top four times in the Pac-10 3,000-meter steeplechase this season and are hoping with a little hometown support, a little luck ... and a little rain, they will be able to finish 1-2 on Fri-

"I love running in the rain," Mestler said. "I would rather run in the rain than run in 85 or 90 degree weather.'

Two runners that could rain on the Duck steeplers' parade are Washington State's Samuel Kibiri and Arizona's Marc Davis, who have the top two times in the event this season.

Kibiri has a time of 8:37.58, and Davis clocked an 8:40.98. Van Scholack — who is also a favorite in the 1,500 - qualified for the NCAA Championships this season with an 8:41.68, and Mestler is just under a second off the NCAA qualifying time with an 8:43.9.
"This race will definitely be

a PR race because of the competition," Van Schoiack said. Van Schoiack and Mestler

said the biggest advantage they will have in the event is the home-crowd support.

"It's my home track. That's all I can say," Van Schoiack said. "I'm just hoping I can stay



Seniors Rick Mestler (left) and Tye Van Scholack have gone from being roommates as freshmen to fellow All-Americans last season.

with whoever's up front."

Mestler agreed.
"It's going to be a difficult race," he said. "I'm just glad

The two have gotten used to running in the homey confines of Hayward Field, and they've also gotten used to learning to compete with each other on a friendly basis.

Van Scholack and Mestler have come a long way since their freshmen years, when they shared a room together and they both took on the unenviable task of trying to make the Duck track team.

"There was definitely a rivalry our freshmen year," Van Schoiack said. "But now we help each other and we get along fine.

"We talked behind each others back a little," Mestler said. "It was a not-so-friendly rival-

That year, Van Scholack and Mestler were competing with two others for steeplechase spots behind Danny Lopez. They both made the team, but Van Scholack injured his ankle

midway through the season. Mestler said it was Van Scholack's injury that laid rest to anything other than a friendly rivalry.

"I'm not saying I was glad he got injured, but after that I didn't worry about Tye and I ran a lot better," Mestler said.

'If Tye finishes first and I finish second, that's fine with me.'

- Rick Mestler,

Oregon steeplechase runner

"Before the injury, I think I worried a lot more about him than he worried about me.'

Mestler went on to make All-American his freshman year, finishing eighth at the NCAA meet. He also made All-American the following two years, including a personal best performance and fourth-place finish at last year's NCAAs.

Van Scholack qualified for the NCAA meet his sophomore year and also set a personal re-cord at last year's national meet, quite a resume considering he was originally a walk-on.

Van Schoiack said he walked on at Oregon because "I basically shot myself in the foot."

"I had a high school meet here, and I went right up to (Oregon head coach) Bill (Dellinger) and asked him if I could run here the following year," he said. "They know when they have you, and I basically let them know they had me right off the bat."

Dellinger is obviously glad Van Schoiack decided to come to Oregon.

"Tye has done a great job," Dellinger said. "He wasn't a great runner coming out of high school. He was good, but he wasn't great. He made the team due to his willingness and de-

Van Scholack attributes much of his success to his ability to stay focused.

"I'm not all that confident, but I have persistence," he said. "It's something you have to stay focused with."

Mestler's focus was something Dellinger questioned this

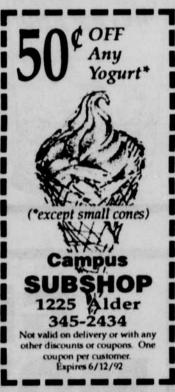
"Over the winter, Rick wasn't sure how badly he wanted to be a runner," he said. "That may have held him back a little as far as his performance this year."

Turn to STEEPLERS, Page 8B

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