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TRACK & FIELD PREVIEW



Washington State's Samuel Kibiri (left) will run in the Pac-10 steeplechase and 1,500 this weekend at Hayward Field.

Brouhaha boiling over Bruins

□ UCLA men's team picked by Duck and Cougar coaches to win Pac-10 meet this weekend

By Dave Charbonneau
 Emerald Sports Reporter

Everyone's passing the baton to UCLA. Contrary to popular belief, UCLA is the favorite to win the Pacific-10 Conference track and field team championship at Hayward Field on Friday and Saturday.

On paper, it would seem that Washington State should be the favorite at the meet that starts at 3:00 p.m. on Friday and 2:00 Saturday, but head coach John Chaplin doesn't seem to think so.

"I don't think we can win the team title," he said. "UCLA is the overwhelming favorite."

Oregon coach Bill Dellinger agreed with Chaplin. "UCLA is the favorite," he said. "Then it's between us and Washington State, with Arizona not far behind."

When UCLA coach Bob Larsen was told his team was considered by some to be the premeet favorite, he laughed.

"What do you expect them to say?," he said. "Anyone who says UCLA will be the champion is trying to set the scene for a chance to be underdogs. Washington State is the favorite."

Whoever the coaches think the favorite will be, it is safe to say the Pac-10 title is a three-team race: Ducks, Cougars and Bruins ... not necessarily in that order.

Washington State looks like the odds-on favorite to repeat as Pac-10 champions. Its strength lies in the distance events with Samuel Kibiri — the top Pac-10 qualifier in the 1,500-meter race and the steeplechase — and Joe Kapkory — the top qualifier in 5,000 and 10,000.

The Cougars should also score well in the 110 and 400 hurdles with Mark Macdonald having the second-best time in each. In addition, they have a top five qualifier in 16 of the 20 events.

The only thing Washington State has going against it is the fact decathlete Rodney Zuyderwyk — who finished second last year in the event — was unable to compete in last weekend's decathlon because of an injury.

Oregon, on the other hand, goes into the meet with a 16-point lead thanks to a first- and third-place finish in the decathlon by Pedro daSilva and Muhammad Oliver, respectively.

"We've already had our biggest event with the decathlon," Dellinger said. "Now we need scoring from everyone we have entered."

The Ducks have favorites with Art Skipper in the javelin and Shannon Lemora in the 800, but after that, they need their other athletes to have great meets.

Tye Van Schoiack (steeplechase and 1,500), Rick Mestler (steeplechase), Pat Haller (5,000), Bob Gray (110 and 400 hurdles) and Ronnie Harris (400) all have chances of finishing at or near the top of their respective events, and if they do, Oregon could give the Cougars a scare.

Even though Dellinger and Chaplin will say different, UCLA is the dark horse of the meet.



Oregon's Bob Gray should contend for a conference title in the 100 and 400 hurdles.

The Bruins will gain points in the sprints and field events, but they will lose valuable points to Oregon and Washington State in the distance races.

"We have a balanced team, but we don't have as many standout athletes," Larsen said. "We don't have our usual strength in the distance races. However, I am optimistic we will be there in the end to make it interesting."

Tony Miller owns the top time in the 200 and the second-best time in the 100, and Marty Beck is the top 400 hurdler in the Pac-10. The Bruins' relay teams are also tough, owning the second-best time in each event.

Arizona will rely heavily on last year's Pac-10 5,000 and steeplechase champion Marc Davis to score points. Last year's 100 and 200 champion, Michael Bates, left Arizona for the NFL, leaving the team with little hope in the sprints.

"We're real weak in the sprints," Davis said. "I'll just get all the points for my team that I can."

The Wildcats could also score points in the 10,000 with Jaime Galindo and Jimmy Rodriguez, but don't expect Arizona to be in the hunt for the championship.

"We won't be in the hunt for the team title," head coach Dave Murray said. "It will be us, Cal and Washington vying for the fourth spot."

Washington's biggest event will be the 800, where it has three of the top four runners in the conference. Mitch Leffler, Dwight Wheaton and Andy Clark will all challenge Lemora for first. The Huskies' Rob Scott is the favorite in the long jump, and Adam Setliff has a chance at winning the discus, but beyond that, Washington will not likely score big in any other events.