



Photo by Jeff Paslay

Lisa Bedwell helps fellow Oregon runner Camara Jones to her feet after a grueling race.

Women's track team makes good showing



FROM THE SIDELINES

BY JAKE BERG

They didn't compete in the multi-events, but at Saturday's close, they might have felt as tired as a heptathlete after a day's work.

By the end of the Pacific-10 Conference Track and Field Championships during the weekend at Hayward Field, more than a handful of the 24 athletes from the first-place Oregon women's track team had done their part to help the Ducks repeat.

Camara Jones. Nicole Woodward. LaReina Woods. Lucy Nusrala. Erika Klein. Lisa Bedwell. Jenna Carlson. Julie Beck. Lots of names. Lots more events.

"We've got quality and quantity both," said Oregon head coach Tom Heinonen. "We were able to utilize it in this meet."

Jones' hot feet torched her competition in the 400-meter run. Bedwell ran to third in the same race. Fellow sprinter Woods finished third in the 100 and the 200.

And all three ran the 4x100 relay for the Ducks in a school record time and second place in the conference.

"We had a lot of unity," Jones said. "This time I felt like we were all on."

Jones and Bedwell were also on in the 4x400 relay — the last event of the meet — and Woods, who usually runs the relay, declined, still trying to catch her breath from trying to catch Inger Miller and Chryste Gaines in the 200.

Following the 100, Woods said she wasn't tired. Not yet, at least, she said.

"I should be after the 200," Woods said.

Erika Klein was more than happy to fill in for Woods, little more than an hour after taking second in the 800.

While Jones, Bedwell, Woods and Klein found themselves answering questions between breaths and drinks of water, Woodward and Nusrala made doubling look easy.

Nusrala beat out her running partner Friday night for first in the 3,000, but Woodward returned the favor Saturday by taking top honors ahead of Nusrala in the 5,000.

Following the two races, the interview area found Woodward and Nusrala to be quite polite guests in their business-as-usual-type manner — as if winning Pac-10 championships was an everyday occurrence.

The Ducks certainly couldn't have done it without their "doubblers," but some played the role of an exhausted athlete well enough to win a conference title based just on merit.

Bedwell said that she felt the thick air of spring dragging on her lungs and feet right from the start of the 400. But that didn't stop her from getting third-place points for Oregon.

"I can still feel it," said an out-of-breath Bedwell. "I don't have any oxygen."

Jones wasn't lacking for air, but she did have plenty of butterflies, she said.

"I've never been that nervous before," Jones said after running only her third 400 this season. "It's the first time since high school that anyone expected anything of me."

Klein anticipated plenty of herself though she only qualified for the Pac-10s at the Oregon Twilight the weekend before. Besides running a leg on the 4x400 relay, the senior finished as the 800 runner-up for the second year in a row.

"I have to be happy with that," she said, "but I'd like to do more."

Could they have done any more, though?

Jake Berg is the sports editor of the Emerald.

TRACK

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"I knew I had to get away from Pat because he was the freshest one out there," he said. "But it hurt doing it that way."

The meet turned into a two-team race after Washington State got off to a horrendous start.

In the very first event of the meet, Matt Shaffer fouled his way to a sixth-place finish in the hammer.

In the steeplechase, Samuel Kibiri lost points for Washington State by finishing fifth in the race.

After the first day, Washington State had only 8.5 points, more than 40 points behind UCLA.

One of the individual highlights of the meet was a Pac-10 record set by California's Ramon Jimenez-Gaona in the discus. His throw of 210-11 crushed the old record by three feet.

Oregon's Art Skipper won his first Pac-10 title in four attempts in the javelin with a sub-par throw of 235-11. Skipper, who has a season best of 251 feet, has been trying to heal a torn stomach muscle and was just happy to be able to throw.

"I didn't feel good at all, but I didn't want to moan and cry about it," he said. "All I wanted was to help the team out."

USC's third-place finish could be attributed to the running of Quincy Watts. Watts won the 400 and ran the anchor legs of the Trojans' relays teams, which both finished first.

Watts finished second at the NCAA Championships last year and came into this season as the top collegiate runner in the nation.

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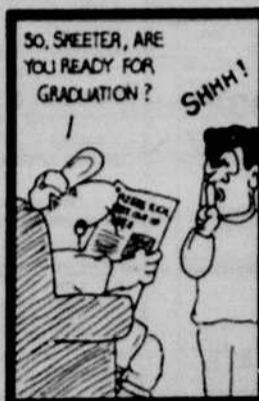
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