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INTO THE OUTDOORS

BY JAYSON JACOBY

Ever get the urge to climb a mountain, but without spending a couple of days getting there?

Sometimes it's enough to at least feel as if you're on top of the world, without actually making it to a summit. By the time you reach the apex of Mount Washington's north ridge, you'll have a mountain-top view without investing too much time on the way.

To start this hike, drive east of Eugene on Highway 126 along the McKenzie River. Three miles past Clear Lake turn right where the road merges with Highway 20 and right again after another three miles at Santiam Junction.

Six miles past the junction — at the Santiam Pass summit — turn right at a sign for Big Lake and Hoodoo Ski Bowl. Follow this paved road 3.5 miles and turn left at a sign for the Pacific Crest Trail. One-half mile on a gravel road brings you to the trailhead. Mount Washington looms ahead along the way.

Remember to fill out a wilderness permit at the trailhead and then hike the wide, easy-to-follow PCT south into the Mount Washington wilderness area. Although you can't see the mountain from this dense, viewless forest of fir and spruce, the trail is actually climbing its gradual lower slopes.

Although it is part of the Cascade range, Mount Washington differs considerably from its neighbors to the north and south such as Mount Shasta and Mount Hood. Mount Washington is much older than either of those volcanoes, and as a consequence, it looks much different.

Like Three Fingered Jack — its cousin to the north — Mount Washington's beginnings were as a shield volcano: a broad, low mountain formed by many eruptions of fluid basalt lava. The Hawaiian volcanoes such as Kilauea are other examples of this type of mountain.

Later eruptions of different types of lava at Mount Washington built up a steeper-sided cone, and the mountain at one time was probably much higher than its present 7,794 feet. But during many tens of thousands of years, the erosive forces of wind, water and especially glacial ice have carved that original volcano into the steep and craggy peak we see today.

The PCT climbs a low ridge about a mile from the trailhead, turns west for a short distance and a view of Three Fingered Jack, then heads due south. Just past the two-mile point, and soon after the trail levels out following a quarter-mile climb,

look closely for a three-foot high rock cairn on the left side.

This is the junction with the climber's trail that heads southwest up Mount Washington's north ridge. Although the route is fairly obvious in most places because of the hundreds of climbers who use it each year, this trip should only be attempted by those with good orienteering skills. A map and compass — and the ability to use them — are essential.

The climber's trail goes steeply along a forested ridge for a mile, before leaving the trees and emerging on the mountain's long north slope. The 800-foot summit pinnacle juts up skyward, looking more like the Matterhorn than a Cascade peak.

After traversing a slope of sandy scree, the trail turns straight uphill for a short distance to gain the ridge's narrow crest. From this point the trail stays on the crest all the way to the base of the pinnacle.

Views extend north to Three Fingered Jack and Mount Jefferson, and several lakes are also visible. The rolling hills of the Old Cascades stretch to the western horizon, and the arid flatlands of Central Oregon fill the view to the east beyond conical Black Butte.

The route becomes gradually steeper and more rock-strewn as it nears the summit, but it isn't hazardous. However, as the ridge meets the pinnacle, the way to the top is obscured and the hike ends.

Mount Washington's summit — one 40-foot vertical pitch (level I-4) and a scramble up several rocky ledges away — should be attempted only by appropriately equipped climbers with competent and experienced leadership. Don't be tempted to make the ascent anyway, as the rock is not reliably solid and it's easy to get off the main climbing route onto even more crumbly and dangerous cliffs. People have died on this mountain by ignoring those precautions.

A unique aspect of this trip is that little has changed since the first successful summit bid was made by six young men from Bend in August, 1923. The trip follows the route they pioneered — and still the one used by the vast majority of climbers. The paths may be a bit more deeply embedded now, but the challenges are still there.

Hikers should bring plenty of water for this physically demanding trip, which gains nearly 2,500 feet of elevation.

Jayson Jacoby is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

Ducks striving for final impact

By Jake Berg
Emerald Sports Editor

The Oregon women's track team has already finished its

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regular season undefeated, and the Ducks won the Pacific-10 Conference title in front of a home crowd at Hayward Field.

What more could they want?

Coach Tom Heinonen said his team has reached his first two team goals, but when the NCAA Championships begin today in Austin, Texas, he said he wants everyone else to know Oregon is there.

"We've already got the cake, and we've already got the icing," he said. "Now I'd like to see us get some candles on the cake."

The potential is there, as five Ducks will have the opportunity to light up their coach's day. Camara Jones in the 400-meter run, Kim Hyatt in the javelin, LaReina Woods in the 200, and Nicole Woodward and Lucy Nusrala in the 5,000 all made the cut to compete in nationals this week.

The men's team may have a better shot at making the Ducks a feared name in Austin this week because of the eight Oregon athletes — all seniors — who are competing. Of the seven Ducks who scored 36 points for a third-place NCAA finish last year, six return this week for their final collegiate competition.

Bob Gray will run both hurdles races. Art Skipper will

throw in the javelin, Shannon Lemora will compete in the 800, Pat Haller will be in the 5,000, Pedro daSilva and Muhammad Oliver will go the distance in the decathlon, and Rick Mestler and Tye Van Schoiack will do the steeplechase.

On the women's side, Hyatt, a three-time All-American, is among the nation's leaders in her event, and Woodward and Nusrala took first and second, respectively, in the conference meet's 5,000. The first level in each event is Thursday.

Sprinters in the NCAAs for Oregon are a rare thing, and Jones and Woods — a provisional qualifier — will be trying to become the first Oregon All-Americans in an event shorter than 800 meters beginning today in their qualifying heats.

The Oregon men will be counting on experience to try and land them a spot among the top team finishers. Skipper, the nation's leader in the javelin, finished third last season, and Gray was second in the 110 hurdles.

Van Schoiack and Mestler, a three-time All-American, should contend for points in the steeple, and decathletes Oliver and daSilva, who were fourth and sixth at the last meet, should be near the top.

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