

Heinonen counting on finishing at top

By Steve Mims
Emerald Sports Reporter

The Oregon women's cross country team is looking for a strong performance Saturday at the Region VIII championships in Tucson, Ariz., to assure a berth in the national championships later this month.

The top two teams at the meet advance to the NCAA Championships on Nov. 23 along with top teams from the other regions and six at-large teams. Oregon needs to finish first or second to automatically qualify for the national meet, but even if they don't, the seventh-ranked Ducks are strong contenders for an at-large bid.

"We must be first or second," Oregon head coach Tom Heinonen said. "We can't rely on an at-large bid because the selection process is quirky. It is scary; we don't have a lot of credentials since Wisconsin is the only team outside our region we have run against, and they beat us. The best teams don't always get in."

The Ducks have won three of the four meets they have run in, including the Pacific-10 Conference championships two weeks ago. At the conference meet, the Ducks cruised to victory with 58 points, beating Washington by 15. The Huskies will be one of Oregon's stiffest opponents again this weekend, along with Arizona, which placed third at the conference meet, and California-Irvine. Washington is ranked 16th in the country, followed by the Wildcats at 19th and Cal-Irvine at No. 23.

"I think if we perform like we did at Pac-10's, we should

get to nationals," Heinonen said. "We had one person that could not perform at Pac-10's, and Washington had two run bad, so they may be better than they showed. Arizona didn't look like they had anything more than they did at Pac-10's, but they get this on their home course, so it could be different."

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— Tom Heinonen,
women's cross-county coach

Senior Nicole Woodward has been Oregon's top runner all year long, winning three races and finishing second at the other. Woodward appears to be peaking at the right time, breaking the 17 minute mark for the first time at the conference meet with a time of 16:51. Woodward missed last year's regional meet, but she appears to be ready to make up for it this year.

"The Pac-10 meet was Nicole's best so far this year," Heinonen said. "She has won three of four races, but it was her best because she faced strong, new competition in Louise Watson of Stanford, and she handled her over the last two kilometers."

Injuries have hit Oregon hard

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Men go after fourth straight win

By Steve Mims
Emerald Sports Reporter

The Oregon men's cross country team will be looking for its fourth straight victory this weekend at the Region VIII championships in Tucson, Ariz.

The Ducks are coming off their best race of the year at the Pacific-10 Conference championships two weeks ago where they upset Arizona to win the title by three points. Oregon needs to finish in the top two at the meet to automatically qualify for the NCAA Championships later this month. The top two teams from each region and three at-large teams advance to the national meet.

"It is not as important to win as to qualify," Oregon head coach Bill Dellinger said. "I hope we can take the district meet in stride and do something at the national level. If we can't, we weren't going to do anything in the nationals, anyway."

The Ducks have been led all year by freshmen Karl Keska and Tracy Hollister. Keska has placed in the top 10 at all three meets he has run this year with a season-best time of 24 minutes, 10 seconds at the Pac-10 meet. Keska, who came to Oregon this year from England, began the season with an eighth-place finish at the Mountain West Classic with a time of 25:07. Keska improved to 24:40 at the Jeff Drenth Memorial before peaking at the confer-

ence meet.

Hollister placed 15th in the season's opening race, but has improved every meet since then. After running in a time of 25:29 at the Mountain West Classic, Hollister improved to 24:50 at the Drenth Memorial before finishing eighth at the conference meet in a time of 24:10.

"Our goal was to win Pac-10's, which many people didn't think was possible, and we did," Hollister said. "It was our best race of the year as a team. Pac-10's was my best individual race this year, but I am getting faster at every race. I think having two weeks off since Pac-10's has helped us because we are improving every week."

Seniors Rick Mestler, Golden Baxter and Tim Julian are the only Ducks with previous experience at the regional meet. Mestler, who finished 29th at the 1990 regional championship, joined the Ducks for their last two meets and finished 11th at the conference championship.

Baxter returned to the Ducks this year after taking a year off. He finished 17th at the meet in 1990. Julian competed in the regional meet last year, finishing 37th.

Junior Jason Humble and sophomore John Dimoff are the other two Ducks who will compete this weekend. Dimoff has competed in all four races for Oregon this year with times ranging from 24:42 to 26:20. Humble finished 13th

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