

Distance runner resorts to voodoo



From the Sidelines

With only a few days remaining until the Pacific-10 Conference track championships, it's time to do some spring cleaning and clear up some important issues surrounding the team.

It's Nice, But Does It Contain Any Cubic Zirconia? — Although distance runner John Dimoff hasn't run any exceptional times this season, he's been drawing a lot of attention during his recent races.

That's because Dimoff is currently the only steeplechaser in the country who wears a "Haitian voodoo necklace" while he runs.

"It's kind of a spiritual thing," said Dimoff, explaining the importance of his necklace, which weighs about four pounds and wraps around his neck twice.

"I made it myself," Dimoff said. "It's made of African trade beads, clay 'skulls,' and a 'worry' stone my mom gave me. My mom said I wouldn't worry about

my running if I used the stone in the necklace."

Dimoff, an economics major who had previously restricted his voodoo necklace wearing to classes and nightclubs, didn't plan on the necklace becoming his running trademark.

"I usually take it off about five minutes before the race," Dimoff said. "But the starter at the Pepsi meet called us to the line early and I just said, 'What the hell, I'll keep it on.'"

Dimoff said the necklace doesn't hinder him while he runs and that nearly everyone likes it.

"Someone asked me where they could buy one; he didn't believe I made it myself," Dimoff said. "The only thing is, one guy calls me Sammy Davis Dimoff now."

Is the necklace a permanent fixture for future meets?

"Until something bad happens, I probably won't take it off," Dimoff said.

Perhaps Dimoff should give the "worry" stone a few extra rubs this week. He has only one meet remaining to cut 20 seconds from his steeplechase time and qualify for the Pac-10 meet.

Doesn't UNLV Have These Problems Too? — There is a professional athlete on the Oregon track team this season.



John Dimoff

But there's no need to call the NCAA for an investigation, everything's legal.

The pro is Ronnie Harris, who received a signing bonus when he inked a free-agent contract with the New England Patriots earlier in the month. In the past, athletes forfeited their amateur status when signing professional contracts, but NCAA rules are less restrictive today.

"There's a new exception to the 'professional' rule," said associate athletic director Barbara Walker. "An athlete can remain an amateur in one sport and be a pro in another."

(Doubters can look under NCAA Bylaw 12-1-4 for proof.)

Harris said he had checked with his agent to make sure he would remain eligible for track

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