

Johnson drawing double duty

By Scott Simonson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Gordon Johnson has become a fixture for Oregon in the 800 meters. That's not a bad thing. He finished fifth in the 800 at the conference championships last year. He's the team's best 800-meter runner again this year.

Johnson has Oregon's best 800-meter time this season. He won the event in Oregon's two dual-meet victories early in the season. The problem is that he'd like to run more. About 700 meters more.

"I've always known the 1,500 eventually would be my event," Johnson said Saturday. He had just finished winning the 1,500 meters at the Oregon Invitational. He also had just run Oregon's fastest 1,500 in three years.

Johnson finished in 3 minutes, 41.52 seconds. He became an NCAA provisional qualifier and missed the automatic qualifying standard by .12 seconds. If Johnson had been running the 1,497 meters, he'd could be making a visit Boise, Idaho, during the first weekend in June for the NCAA championships.

Even without the automatic mark, Johnson's time appears to be good enough to send him to the NCAA's. Before Saturday, Johnson's reputation was as an 800 man. He had never come within seven seconds of the time he ran at the Oregon Invitational.

Head coach Bill Dellinger said he wasn't surprised. He's seen how Johnson has run in practice, he said. Teammate Scott Nicholas, who finished second to Johnson on Saturday, wasn't surprised that Johnson won, either.

But Nicholas said he wasn't counting on "getting spanked" in the event. Johnson was running so hard when he passed Nicholas near the end of the race that Nicholas said he wondered if Johnson had skipped the first



Mark McTyre for the Emerald
Gordon Johnson has Oregon's best times in the 800 and 1,500 meters this season.

events."

Again this season, Oregon is not as experienced or as deep in the 800 as in the 1,500. Johnson, a senior, again has been called upon by Dellinger to score points for Oregon in the event.

Johnson said he thinks he can run the 800 in close to 1:48 flat, which would be good enough for an NCAA provisional qualifying time.

"I just want to try to run and try to win as many races as possible and keep myself healthy," he said. "To qualify (for the NCAA's) in the 800 and 1,500 is more than I can ask for. I want to get to nationals, qualify for the finals, then do well there."

Oregon's media guide claims Johnson has an "aggressive" running style. "The goal in the 800 is to make life miserable for as many people as possible," he said. He likes to get in front and push the pace. "I don't like for it to be a kicker's race. I guess that's what they think of me as aggressive."

Johnson is completing his second season at Oregon after transferring from Merritt Junior College in Oakland, Calif. He said he will be trying to find a job and will be getting married next year. Johnson would like to keep running and see where that takes him.

"Realistically, I think we can do really well in the distances at the Pac-10," Johnson said. He expects even greater accomplishment from Oregon's freshman and sophomore distance- and middle distance-runners in years to come.

"A lot of guys are capable of running as well if not better than some of the guys they've had here in the past," he said. "The tradition's coming back — people should be patient and they will see some good running."

If people keep watching Johnson, they may be seeing good running sooner than they expect.

ASUO, AD mum about seating plan

The ASUO and athletic department will likely meet later this week to continue negotiations on the seating arrangements at McArthur Court for men's basketball games.

Senior associate athletic director Sandy Walton and ASUO President Eric Bowen had little to say about the negotiations other than the fact that they were going rather smoothly.

The negotiations are the result of standing students blocking the view of reserved-seat ticket holders at Oregon home games this season. In a game against Arizona, nearly 200 students were asked to find alternative seating at halftime of the game.

Two rows of seats in various student sections were then roped off for the Ducks' final two home games.

In other student seating developments, there will be a measure on the ballot in next week's elections asking students for a \$1.75 hike in incidental fees to do away with the \$2.00 charge for student seats at football and men's basketball games that was imposed at the beginning of this school year.

The \$2.00 fee was the result of the Incidental Fee Committee cutting the athletic department's allocation of fees last year.

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