

Clearing the COMPETITION

Junior high jumper Chris Nelson has yet to be defeated this season, but is still looking to reach the elusive 7-4 1/2 mark at this weekend's Oregon Twilight Invitational

By Pete Schneider
Sports Reporter

Record holders don't always make the most important jumps during meets.

In hopes of giving something back to the Eugene community that so feverishly supports the Ducks' track and field program, Chris Nelson, the Oregon high jump record holder, participated in a track and field demonstration at an area grade school. The program was designed to show kids how much fun track can be and to generate some youthful interest in the sport.

Nelson really brought the house down when he jumped over the head of shot-putter Dusty Carlson, who stands six feet tall.

"The whole point was to impress the kids and get them excited about track," said Nelson, who hails from Klamath Falls. "It was fun because after we were done with the show, the kids came up and just swarmed us for autographs. It was fun to see them all so excited about us."

In his junior season in an Oregon track uniform, Nelson has turned more than just grade schoolers' heads with his high-jumping achievements. During the winter indoor season, he broke Andy Young's seven-year-old mark with a leap of 7-4 1/2.

Nelson picked up this spring where he left off last winter, winning every single high-jump competition he has entered this season. He also had a string of five consecutive meets in which he jumped over 7 feet. He posted his personal outdoor best of 7-3 two weeks ago at the Drake Invitational.

"He's very trustworthy as a jumper," said Oregon assistant coach John Gillespie. "If someone is going to beat him, he's such a competitor that he will be

right in the middle of the competition. I was surprised that he got the record that soon in this career and that he's been so consistent afterwards."

Even Nelson, who also competes for the Ducks in the triple jump and on the mile relay team, is surprised at his ability to remain consistent with his jumping this season.

"Seven feet used to be a pretty big mark for me," said Nelson, who first broke the 7-foot barrier as a freshman. "Everything is clicking this year. My approach, which had been a problem for me, is feeling a lot better, and everything else is falling into place."

By jumping 7-3 earlier in the season, Nelson has provisionally qualified for the NCAA championships, but he needs to clear 7-4 1/2 to automatically qualify.

According to Gillespie, Nelson would be rated the third or fourth high jumper at the NCAA meet. Nelson has the Oregon Twilight Invitational this weekend and the Pacific-10 Conference Championships next weekend to guarantee a spot at the NCAA Championships later this month.

"I'm not really shooting for the [outdoor] record," Nelson said. "I'd really like to automatically qualify for the NCAAs. That would really take the pressure off. I have trouble clearing 6-10 in practice sometimes, so 7-4 1/2 will be tough."

Nelson has been on the fast track toward jumping success since high school. As a sophomore in 1991, he went from being a 10th-ranked jumper to being the 4A State Champion with a jump of 7-0. Competing for Mazama High, he also established the Oregon state record with a leap of 7-1.

As a fine and applied arts major, Nel-



Junior Chris Nelson broke the Oregon indoor high jump mark this winter and hasn't looked back, winning every high jump this spring.

son has also shown his prowess in the classroom by earning first-team academic all-conference recognition last year. Only a junior, Nelson has excelled both on and off the field and has a whole season to look forward to next year.

Nelson has been on a roll lately. After five-straight meets jumping higher than seven feet, he missed at 7-3 1/2 last week-

end at Washington after clearing 6-10.

"Jumping over 7-4 has opened a lot of doors for me," he said. "I don't want to jinx myself saying that I haven't lost all season, but just having that confidence going into every meet helps more than anything. I just want to keep on winning, which will hopefully carry on into the post season."

Twilight last chance for Ducks to gain qualifying marks

■ **MEN'S TRACK AND FIELD:** Ducks look for a chance to compete in the next week's Pac-10 and NCAA Championships

By Pete Schneider
Sports Reporter

For some Oregon track and field athletes, the Oregon Twilight meet will merely be a tuneup for next week's Pacific-10 Conference Championships; for others, it will be the last regular season opportunity to set or improve upon NCAA provisional standards.

The men's team already boasts two automatic qualifiers for the NCAA Championships (sophomore Matt Davis in the 10,000-meter run and junior Daniel Das Neves in the 3,000-meter steeplechase) and eight athletes who have provisionally qualified.

"We'd like to have more provisional qualifiers," head coach Bill Dellinger said. "At the beginning of the year, I was hoping that we would have at least 12 people qualified for the NCAAs. So we still have our work ahead to get these people qualified."

The Oregon Twilight will surely make for some fast times as a number of post-collegians and former Olympians will compete alongside the Ducks. The most interesting race of the day might shape up to be the 1,500-meter run as senior Karl Keska



Sophomore Jennifer Thomas will compete in the heptathlon at the Pacific-10 Conference Championships this weekend.

Ducks hope to find zone at track meet

By Andrea De Young
Assistant Sports Editor

The 1996 track and field season has dwindled down to one final home meet, and that meet is the last chance for some of the athletes who have goals of making to the post-season.

The annual Oregon Twilight is a showcase of some of the Ducks' top athletes competing against one other to gain the numbers it will take to keep their seasons going. It's now or never for the women who have yet to put up qualifying marks for the Pacific-10 Conference Championships next weekend and the NCAA Championships the first weekend in June.

Although the athletes will primarily be competing against

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