



Distance runner Joaquim Cruz helped the 1984 Oregon men's track and field team capture the national title at Hayward Field.

Coaches: Enthusiastic crowds add to Hayward's atmosphere

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At many schools across the country, athletes and coaches have to travel by car or bus to certain events.

"Hayward Field is a good facility for track and field," Dellinger said. "There are a lot of schools that can't accommodate the NCAAs because of a lack of spectator seating and a lack of top-notch facilities. Some places make you drive miles away for some events."

Hosting the national championships is a big deal for the Eugene community and Oregon's track and field programs.

Staging a meet of this caliber on a semi-regular basis is a huge asset in terms of recruiting and establishing Eugene as one of the premiere track and field centers in the United States.

"We use it as a recruiting tool a lot," Heinonen said. "It's a feather in our cap to be able to host the NCAAs, and it is a challenge to show the rest of the track community that Eugene is one of the best places in the country to stage such an event."

Dellinger knows that hosting a

meet like the national championships is not only an opportunity to see the best collegiate athletes competing on one stage, but a chance to glimpse into the future of the sport.

"It's one of the best meets in the nation," he said. "It's the future of track talent, not only in the United States, but in the world. You see the Carl Lewises and the Michael Johnsons come through the collegiate programs. We'll also be looking at the next great stars of the Olympics this year, in Australia in 2000 and so on."

Most of all, the NCAA Track and Field Championship meet is an opportunity to see one of the biggest and most exciting sporting events in the country.

"When the crowd roars at a national meet, you know as an athlete that it is for you," Heinonen said. "When an Oregon athlete makes a move and the crowd responds, that's a thrill many don't have the luxury of feeling."

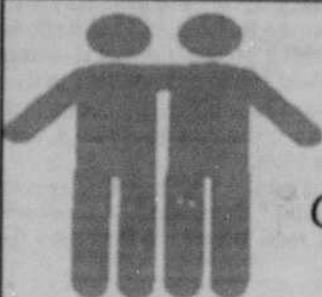
"It can be really spectacular and can really pull an athlete along and inspire him or her to another level."

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