

Coach: Dellinger has been competing, coaching for 50 years

■ Continued from Page 5

says in a tone that boasts pride, a sense of accomplishment and an unconditional love for the program. "When I was in high school, I always wanted to come to Oregon to run for Bill Bowerman. When I started coaching, it was always a dream to some day come here as a coach.

"Some guys dream of being millionaires or whatever. I dreamt of coming to Oregon and being a coach."

Dellinger's one regret, if you can call it that, says a lot about the competitive spirit that drives the man who Southern California's director of track, Ron Allice, says is the "dean of all the coaches left in the Pac-10 Conference."

"I would have liked to have won more championships and been more successful," Dellinger says. No, he is not joking.

"It's been a good program, and we've won our share of champi-

onships," he says. "I guess I'm getting hoggish to say I wish I could have won more, but I think anyone would say that. Your goal is to win them every year if you can — fair and square that is. I don't believe in doing anything that's unethical with this program."

It is that integrity, that unwillingness to bend or break the rules in order to gain a competitive advantage, as well as his long list of accomplishments, that has Dellinger so well-respected by his peers.

"He's a man's man," says Allice, who has directed the Trojans the past three seasons. "All the coaches like him. He's a straightforward guy and a fun-loving guy. He's not aloof or anything like that. He shares his knowledge and tells you in clinics, and so forth, exactly what the program's about, how he operates and so on."

Dave Murray, Arizona men's track and field head coach, has

been associated with either the Wildcats' track and field or cross country programs since 1968 and has seen many of Dellinger's accomplishments first hand. Murray says Dellinger is what Oregon track is all about.

"When you think of Oregon track and field, you think of Bowerman and Dellinger, and it would be kind of hard to think of Oregon without those two names," Murray says. "With his retiring, obviously, [Oregon] is probably going to lose one of the best track and field coaches in the history of the NCAA, in my opinion."

"He's just done a magnificent job there at Oregon over the years. I think he probably has been the envy of many track coaches across the country for a variety of things."

And it is a variety of things that has led to Dellinger's pending retirement, two years earlier than he had planned.

"I originally was going to stay through the year 2000; I would have been 66," he says. "For some reason, that sounded like a magic year to me. There was nothing special other than it would have been three coaches through the 20th century. That's not a real good reason, other than in my own mind."

Dellinger says financial rea-

sons and his prostate cancer prompted him to step down earlier than planned.

"The retirement thing works out best this year in terms of I actually would lose money in my retirement system by staying on two more years."

"Then when I found out this past summer that I had prostate cancer, I think that was part of the decision, so that whatever number of years I have left I'd like to be able to do some different things."

It was during a rather routine physical examination that the prostate cancer was discovered, and Dellinger began treatment immediately.

He underwent the 15th of 25 radiation treatments last Wednesday and says doctors will put radiated seeds in the prostate in March to attack the cancer with radiation a final time.

"Then, basically, treatment is done," he says, "and if they caught it early enough, there's [about] a 90 percent chance that they've got the cancer."

Dellinger has faced the battle with cancer courageously, never stopping to wallow in self-pity or to wonder, "Why me?"

"As you get older and older, there are more and more things that can happen to you and most of them are bad, so you just kind

of accept them and keep going with it.

"It takes a lot of courage to grow old because there are so many things that can go wrong. I was going along my way thinking I was invincible and I suddenly found out that I'm not, so it kind of woke me up."

It woke him up and, in a way, helped push him out the door.

Dellinger admits, though, it probably is about time.

"I've been either competing or coaching since I was about 14-years-old," he says. "So in a way I look forward to being able to do something different, to do some things that I've always wanted to do — go fishing in Alaska or maybe in the winter time when it's raining here, to be in Tucson or somewhere golfing."

And, he says, life in retirement will include coaching.

Dellinger currently coaches and will continue to coach a small number of post collegians, including standout distance runner Mary Slaney.

"I'm going to be involved with track, just not at the collegiate level, that's all," he says.

Once a coach, always a coach.

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SPORTS BRIEFS

Men's tennis wins two over weekend

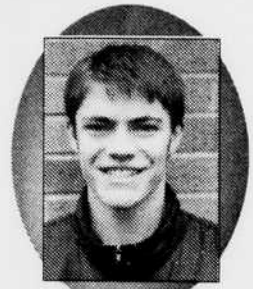
The Oregon men's tennis team won both its nonconference matches in Southern Cali-

fornia, while the women's team split its two nonconference matches in Northern California.

The men (7-3 overall, 0-2 Pacific-10 Conference) defeated UC Irvine Saturday and Loyola

Marmount Sunday, both by the same 5-2 score.

The women (3-5 overall, 0-2 Pac-10) lost to No. 29 Fresno State 5-0 Saturday and beat Pacific 5-4 Sunday.



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