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SPORTS

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Enjoying the Spotlight

In her third season, Oregon pitcher Jennie Cook finally feels comfortable as the center of attention

By Joel Hood
Sports Reporter

Two things are clear on this remarkable, 65-degree spring day: the crowd that has gathered at Howe Field on this sun-soaked afternoon is watching one of softball's most intense competitors work her craft to perfection.

And every so often, just to break the tension, Oregon pitcher Jennie Cook will acknowledge her fans with a playful smile or a simple brush back of her hair.

Although she is now comfortably in control of both the game and her role as the Ducks' leading lady, Cook's stone-faced expression rarely changes. There is a pause, then the windup, which resembles a long cursive "L" — then the sound of a whip cracking.

It could be said that every triumph and every defeat Cook has endured in her two seasons with the Ducks and four all-star seasons at Elmira High School have groomed her for this moment.

Even her skin, a dark, honey-brown, reflects a career spent on center stage. It too has been burnt, if not by the sun, then by the intense spotlight of one of sports' most scrutinized and isolated positions.

"I don't like being singled out that much because this is a team sport," Cook says. "But I realize that I am the pitcher and that I'm going to be. I've always been in the spotlight; now it just comes easy to me."

"I think I am a leader, and I've grown to enjoy having that pressure on me. Now I like having two runners on with two outs in the last inning. I like being put into that situation."

Be it by accident or intent, Cook has made the most of her role in the Oregon spotlight this season. And her quiet, workman-like persona makes her an unlikely hero to lead the charge for the Ducks as they look for a return to the postseason.

"She's an integral part of the program," head coach Rick Gamez says. "It's her overall attitude that sets her apart. She has a



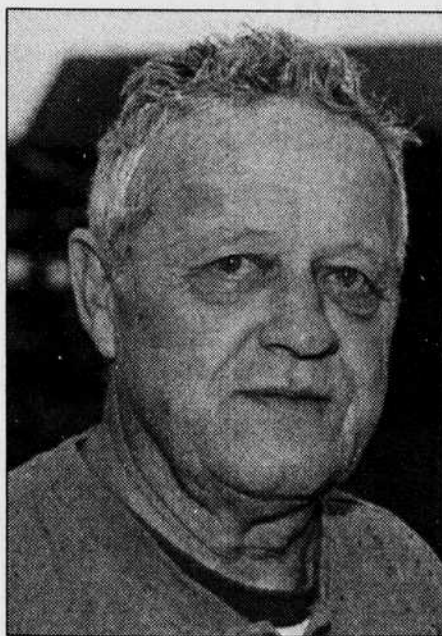
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"Now I like having two runners on with two outs in the last inning. I like being put into that situation."

Jennie Cook
Oregon pitcher

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With Cook in the circle, Oregon has its sights set on postseason play for the first time since 1994.



NICK MEDLEY/Emerald

Dellinger hopes to help the University search for his replacement.

Replacing Dellinger will take time

Athletic director Bill Moos says Oregon is in the beginning stages of searching for a replacement for Bill Dellinger, who will retire after this season

By Alex Pond
Sports Editor

Oregon officials were given plenty of warning of men's track and field head coach Bill Dellinger's pending retirement at the end of the year.

And they are in no hurry to name a replacement for the man who has led the program for 26 seasons and the men's cross country team for 31.

"We're still in the beginning stages [of the search]," Oregon athletic director Bill Moos said Wednesday. "I'm in the process of visiting with several people and trying to establish a posture for this thing as to which direction Oregon track and field should be going."

The decision, Moos said, is to determine whether that direction should be one that continues Dellinger's emphasis in dual meets — and spreading the 12.5 available scholarships around to field a full team — or to adapt to the more modern concept that many programs are turn-

ing to. That is the stockpiling of the scholarships in a smaller number of top-caliber athletes in order to compete for a national championship on a consistent basis.

"I just want to get a good feel from a lot of people and a lot of resources as to which direction the program should go in that regard," Moos said.

He said he met last week with Oregon Track Club members and will be meeting next week "with about 10-12 people that are former athletes and strong track and field supporters within the community."

"We will also utilize the Nike connection and the resources up there," Moos added. "They have perhaps the best network in track and field in the world and so that's a very valuable resource as well."

Dellinger announced his decision in February to retire for a number of reasons, including the discovery late last summer that he has prostate cancer, for which he is currently undergoing treatment.

Moos said he will be talking to the 64-year-old



Possible Candidates

■ **John Gillespie**
Oregon assistant coach the past 17 years

■ **Pat Tyson**
Head track and field coach in Spokane, Wash., Mead High School and former Oregon runner

■ **Matt Centrowitz**
Former all-American distance runner at Oregon

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