



Smith, one of three candidates who applied for the job, addresses the Oregon media for the first time last July.

Track

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to the next level."

Smith worked with members of the track team during the cross country season last fall to try and create a "base" for the team. Among that group of runners was junior Steve Fein, who transferred from Wisconsin in September to continue running for his college coach.

The autumn workouts strongly resembled the workouts that Smith would do in Wisconsin, Fein says.

"He had lots of success in the past, and he's not going to change that," Fein says. "He's going to stick to the same form and continue to have success with that."

Junior Laird Prosser, who ran for Dellinger from 1996 to 1998, was one of the handful of Oregon runners who worked with Smith during the fall. Prosser says Smith's approach to coaching has brought something new to the track program.

"Something is here that hasn't been here before, and that is a different type of attitude," Prosser says. "He brings a seriousness to the program, maybe I just didn't detect it before."

"[Smith] is very intense. He's very driven. He's working toward building the team, and he expects the same attitude among the team. He works very hard."

The men's track and field indoor season began last Saturday in Reno, Nev., at the Silver State Invitational. Smith says he would like to use the indoor season as a "tool to prepare for the outdoor season."

However, Smith has not yet had the time to bond with his new team to establish any specific goals for the upcoming season. He does not know if the Ducks can capture the Pac-10 Championships, or if they will even stand a chance at doing so.

But there are certain things that Smith would like to see happen.

"I would like to see the coaching staff gel together and form a chemistry, and I want to make sure no athletes take any steps backwards," Smith says. "I also want to begin steps of having a strong, positive recruiting year, but it may take a little bit."

Fein, who developed strong ties with Smith as a Badger, says in time, Smith will be a great fit in Oregon's track and field history.

"His main goal is to return the Oregon track program, and make it No. 1," Fein says. "There's no doubt in my mind that in the years to come, he will put it back on top."

Smith says there are still some awkward moments with his new team. He says it is not easy for a team to adjust to a new head

coach and that the departure of Dellinger has left him with "big shoes to fill."

But he also says he feels accepted by his team and the coaching staff. Although the transition process is not over, he understands it will take time.

"I feel reasonably welcome here," Smith says. "You've just got to do the best you can. It's hard to believe anything good happens overnight. The transition to Oregon has been very positive from my perspective."

Prosser agrees that this transition will take time, and from the standpoint from a team member, he welcomes the arrival of Smith and says his teammates are beginning to form relationships with their new coach.

"Everyone on the team is starting to develop their own relationship with Martin," Prosser says. "It takes a little time, but it's starting to happen. It's still in the developing stage, but I think that it is definitely developing. There is not a 100 percent comfort level yet, but people are growing more comfortable every day."

As the team grows closer to their new coach, there is no telling what lies ahead for the Ducks. But until the team reaches the ranks of the country's elite, Smith will continue to do what he knows best — coaching.

Phil Simms' son chooses Texas

Lefty Quarterback Chris Simms is considered among the top prep players in the country

By Tom Canavan
The Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Chris Simms, son of former New York Giants quarterback Phil Simms, had a change of heart and will play football at Texas instead of national champion Tennessee, his coach said Monday evening.

The surprise switch came more than a month after a mid-Decem-

ber announcement that Simms would join the Volunteers.

Texas and Penn State were the other finalists in the recruiting battle for the left-handed quarterback considered among the top prep players in the country.

"He has had some time over the last few weeks to reflect and think about it before he made it final, and he weighed it out in his mind and he just felt Texas was a better fit for him," said Mike Miello, Simms' coach at Ramapo (N.J.) High School.

The younger Simms was not immediately available for comment.

Simms' choice will not become official until he signs a national letter of intent on Feb. 3, the first day high school players are permitted to sign with a school.

"I was surprised with the first decision and then he changed his mind, but I am happy for him because he looks at peace with his decision," Miello said. "There's no apprehension with it at all. He really feels good about it."

Texas, meanwhile, has Major Applewhite returning for the next few seasons, but Simms could move up quickly in since the Longhorns lack depth at quarterback.

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