

Oregon to compete at NCAA indoor finals

Coach Martin Smith says the team will compete on its best level at the meet

By Allison Ross and Scott Pesznecker
Oregon Daily Emerald

The NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships start today in Indianapolis, and nine Ducks from the Oregon men's and women's teams will be a part of the action.

Four Duck men — seniors Greg James and Richard Girvan along with juniors Nat Johnson and Laird Prosser — will make their NCAA debuts, competing in the distance medley relay.

Junior Steve Fein, who ran the anchor leg for the 1,600-meter relay team in the qualifying meet last weekend, was replaced by James so Fein will be fresh for the individual 3,000-meter race, Oregon head coach Martin Smith said.

"Our first goal was to get a team there," Smith said. "Once that was accomplished we set new goals. We're not satisfied with just getting there. We have a standard to compete at our best level."

Senior Micah Davis will join Fein in the 3,000-meter race for Davis' first NCAA indoor competition. Davis qualified at the Cyclone Classic on Feb. 6 with a personal-best time of 8 minutes, 3.36 seconds.

Also competing for the men will be senior pole vaulter Piotr Buciarski, who is returning to the indoor championships for the third time. Buciarski enters today's meet as the top provisional

qualifier and seventh overall with a season-best mark of 17 feet, 8 1/2 inches.

"A very good starting point for [Buciarski] would be to finish in the top six," Martin said. "This meet is a good catalyst for the outdoor season."

Competing in Indianapolis for the women's team are sophomore Karina Elstrom in the pole vault and senior Kaarin Knudson in the mile. Women's head coach Tom Heinonen said the NCAA Championships will be a positive experience for both Ducks.

"Kaarin is a fifth-year senior, so this is her last go-round, and Karina is one of the lead vaulters in the country," he said. "This is what we've been aiming for."

Elstrom, the sixth seed overall, vaulted her best mark of the season — 12 feet, 9 1/2 inches — on Jan. 23 at the USA Track and Field Pole Vault Summit. This is Elstrom's third appearance at the NCAA Championships.

"Karina had a lifetime best in her first meet," Heinonen said. "She hasn't vaulted well lately, but she's ready to go."

The NCAA Championships will also be Knudson's third, and she enters today's competition ranked ninth out of 17 competitors. Knudson made her return to the national scene after missing last year's winter and spring seasons because of injury.

Knudson is in great physical shape, but she says she will have to work harder to focus on the competition today after the death of her grandfather last weekend.

Women

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"Brienne has been in the big games," Oregon head coach Jody Runge said, "but she had problems matching up on defense. Stanford is a very athletic team."

While Oregon struggled on the inside, Stanford's inside players had their way. Donaphin was seven for seven from the field and collected nine re-

bounds, six on the defensive end. Sophomore forward Sarah Dimson added 12 points on five of eight from the field.

"They came out in the second half and really got after us physically," Runge said. "They got the ball to their big kids, who were able to score or get to the free-throw line, and it was tough for us to recover."

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