

Deadly Ducks survive regional

After a mediocre first round, Oregon puts its way to a berth in the NCAAAs by finishing fifth overall

By Brett Williams
for the Emerald

If there was any doubt in Oregon's mind that is one of the best men's golf teams in the nation, consider it erased.

After finishing the first day of the NCAA West Regionals in Tucson, Ariz., with a mediocre score of 297 and a 10th-place standing, the Ducks rebounded to finish fifth, clinching a spot at the NCAA Championships on June 2-5 in Minneapolis, Minn.

Oregon head coach Steve Nosler expected his team's revival.

"They knew what they needed to do, so it didn't surprise me," said Nosler, who will take Oregon to nationals for the second-straight season. "Adversity came up, and we played our way through it."

The Ducks improved their overall game in the last two rounds, but Nosler saw the most significant improvements in his team's putting.

"We putted a lot better after round one," Nosler said. "We knew we had to have a good round, and it gave us an opportunity to be in it going into the

last round."

The Ducks were led by senior Ben Crane, who finished in 12th place with a final score of 217. Crane is no stranger to the pressure of regionals; he finished second in the tournament last season.

Nosler was pleased with how Crane carried the Ducks throughout the three-day tournament.

"Ben hit the ball extremely well," Nosler said. "He played real solid in the final round."



Derek Croskrey finished in 17th place, shooting a 219, and Ryan Lavoie and Adrian Burton tied deadlocked for 29th place. Andrew Tredway overcame a subpar, 80-stroke performance in the first round to shoot 75 and 72, respectively, in the final two rounds.

Nosler was pleased with his team's competitiveness.

"All five guys played well, and they were all right in the running until the end," Nosler said.

Arizona State repeated as regional champion, finishing with a score of 854. They never trailed in the tournament, courtesy of the play of Eugene native Jeff Quinney, who finished first individually with a score of 209.

Women

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season, when she lost the lead in the final lap to Stanford's Moral Chokshi.

But it was Davis' turn to unleash a brutal kick on the backstretch this time around. The senior spent most of the race in fifth place before taking the lead with a lap to go.

For a moment, it appeared that the Cardinal would pull another upset when Julia Stamps retook the lead with less than 350 meters remaining. But Davis surged ahead at the 200-meter mark.

She won the race by 15 meters over Stamps.

"My goal was to win and run a tactical race," Davis said. "I wanted practice for the NCAA meet, and that's what I did."

Davis, who also ran the 5,000 Saturday and finished third with a time of 16:42.35, is relieved that she can now focus on the NCAA Championships on June 2-5.

"It feels nice," she said. "It's scary to know that my collegiate career is coming down to one meet, but it's what I've been aiming for. I want to give it my all and see what I can do."

Niki Reed was the Ducks' top scorer in the pole vault. The freshman tied her personal-best mark of 12 feet, 8 inches to finish second in the event.

"I was really nervous on my first few heights," Reed said. "As the heights got higher, it was more fun."

The meet was Reed's first collegiate postseason meet. She said she didn't know what to expect coming into the competition, and her aunt and cousins from Tucson, Ariz., attended the meet and helped her relax.

"They helped me be a little more loose, not so stressed out," Reed said.

Karina Elstrom finished in fifth place with a height of 11-11 3/4. Elstrom and Reed will compete at the NCAAAs.

In the discus, Heidi Fisk threw

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Heidi Fisk
UO thrower

an NCAA-provisional mark of 170-6 and finished in fifth place. The distance was a personal record for Fisk by almost six feet.

"It was the best way to end a career," Fisk said. "That was the highest I've ever finished in four Pac-10 meets at Oregon."

It is uncertain whether Fisk's throw will get her into the NCAA meet, but she said she is keeping her fingers crossed.

"I [set a personal best] in a big meet," she said. "Either way, I'm going to be happy."

The Ducks also had a trio of throwers score in the javelin. Natasha Cooper finished in fifth with a throw of 144-0, Jennifer Cutburth placed sixth with 138-1 and Sara Dinsmore landed in seventh with a mark of 136-7.

Many other Duck athletes put points on the board for Oregon.

Kaarin Knudson posted a fourth-place finish in the 800 Saturday with a time of 2:08.28 after racing a time of 2:11.26 in Friday's preliminary round.

Katie Crabb finished seventh in the 1,500 with a time of 4:33.50, and Annie Ebner held onto eighth place in the 3,000 with a time of 10:13.72.

Hilary Holly led Oregon's jumpers by finishing seventh in the long jump with a mark of 19-0 1/2.

Searching for a fourth and final NCAA berth in the 400 hurdles, Tish Henes missed the needed mark by running 59.98 Friday and 1:00.71 Saturday and finishing seventh.

Men

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"I'm happy with the [personal record], but I don't know if I'll get into the NCAAAs," Thomas said. "We'll just have to wait and see. Overall, we're pretty pleased with the results."

On Saturday, Oregon's day was mixed with record-breaking events — the 4x400 relay — and unexpected setbacks — the 1,500.

Senior Will Driessen, who was plagued with a foot injury for most of the season, was seeded ninth in the 400 hurdles, but he finished second (51.83).

"I fought through the race," Driessen said. "All the competition was incredible. I wish every race was like that."

Driessen had one more opportunity to compete for Oregon on Saturday, and his anchor leg in the 4x400 relay led the Ducks to a second-place finish and a season-best time of 3:08.17.

That quartet ran the third-fastest time in Oregon history, proving its sixth seed to be inaccurate.

"The mile relay was incredible," Driessen said. "Everybody gave 110 percent. We all knew this was it, the last meet of the season for a lot of people and the last ever for others."

The season couldn't have ended worse for junior Todd Humcke. Just into the first lap of the 1,500, Stanford's Jake Maas collided with California's Chris Maier. Maier and Oregon junior Steve Fein fell and Humcke tripped over the two. Fein and

Humcke were able to continue but managed to finish in just eighth and 11th place, respectively.

Fein, who automatically qualified for the national championships in the 5,000 at the Cardinal Invitational on May 7, has another opportunity to place higher in postseason competition.

Washington State's Bernard Lagat, the favorite heading into the meet, won the event in 3:52.06.

Oregon sophomore Kyle Johnson

was looking to defend his high jump title from last season and win Oregon's fourth-straight title in the event. But he came up a bit short, finishing third with his season-best leap of 6-10 3/4.

"I wanted to win it," Johnson said. "It started out as my best meet. On my last attempt, I heard the crowd cheer, and I thought I had it, but as I got off the mat, [the bar] fell down. A heartbreaker."

While Johnson's experience in the high jump was less than gratifying, senior Joe DeRieux closed his career at Oregon by improving his season-best jump by two inches, finishing in fourth and matching Johnson's mark.

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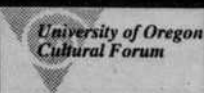
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