

Women

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cans — would end their storied Oregon careers by earning distinguishing honors once more.

But not all stories have a happy ending.

Davis never got into the flow of Wednesday's 3,000 qualifying run, and she failed to make the finals by finishing eighth with a time of 9 minutes, 42.32 seconds. In her second event, Saturday's 5,000, Davis faltered again with a 21st-place, 17:55.19 finish.

"It's hard to go out and run when you have such high expectations for yourself," Davis said. "It was also hard to know it was my last race. It was sad and discouraging, but lots of things happen unexpectedly in life. This was one of them."

Knudson's performance was dampened by the effects of an upper-respiratory infection. She started strong in Friday's 1,500 qualifying run, but she lost the lead after the first two laps and went flat in the final 250 meters. Her 10th-place time of 4:31.27 did not qualify her for the 1,500 finals.

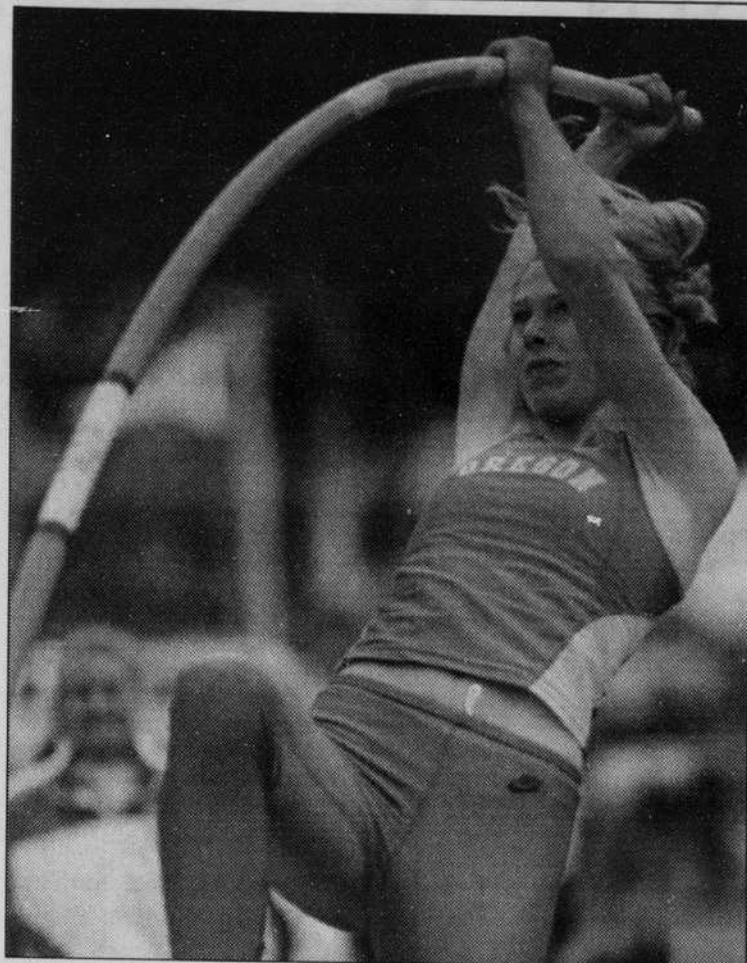
Both athletes needed medical attention after their races.

"They were unfortunate circumstances for the seniors who devoted such time and energy to this team," head coach Tom Heinonen said. "But none of it was in our control — none of it."

Gusty winds affected sophomore pole vaulter Karina Elstrom's performance. She finished 18th in vaulting 11 feet, 7 3/4 inches.

However, the season's conclusion showed some promise for the future. Freshman Niki Reed earned All-American honors in the pole vault by finishing fifth with a height of 12-9 1/2.

"Niki was great," Heinonen said. "She was relaxed, yet excited, too. She enjoyed the competition and vaulted really



Niki Reed vaulted 12 feet, 9 1/2 inches to win All-American honors at the NCAAAs.

Nick Medley/Emerald

well. She beat Melissa Price, who's been the collegiate leader all season. She was unflappable."

The season was an uphill battle for the Ducks. Athletes like Heidi Fisk and Tish Henes fell short of traveling to the NCAA meet, while others like freshmen Alexis Yeater and Endia Abrante never quite materialized.

And as a team, things were even more troubling. Oregon lost both triangular meets of the season, including losses to Nebraska and Washington in its own Pepsi Team Invitational on May 8.

But Heinonen does not think

of it as a rebuilding season. Rather, he said he'll remember it as an upward battle filled with change.

"Our 12 seniors carried us a long way this year, but they didn't have enough backups," Heinonen said. "We had half as many powerful athletes this year as we needed to have to compete."

"The amount of change and difficulty dealt with this season was more than I've ever seen."

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