

Oregon Daily
Emerald
Editor in chief: Laura Cadiz
Sports Editor: Tim Pyle

Sports

Best Bet
World Cup Rugby
Tournament, quarterfinals
1:00 p.m., FoxSports



Running down **A** **DREAM**

After coming to Oregon without a scholarship, Andrew Bliss has worked his way from walk-on to co-captain and potential All-American

By Jeff Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

The term "walk-on" is defined in Webster's Dictionary as "a bit role in which an actor has few if any words to speak."

Somebody forgot to tell Andrew Bliss exactly what that means.

Bliss, a senior co-captain on the Oregon men's cross country team, walked-on to the team back in 1995-96, and this is the story of his remarkable climb up the cross country ranks that has him playing anything but "a bit role."

Bliss is one of only two Ducks that returned this season with national championship experience, the other being All-American senior Steve Fein. He has already helped lead his team in strong performances at the Pre-NCAAs on Oct. 16 and the Roy Griak Invitational on Sept. 25, finishing second among Oregon runners in both races.

"To have a senior with Andrew's experience on a team that's relatively inexperienced is very important," head coach Martin Smith said. "Andrew has a number of athletic gifts, and I think his strongest skill is his ability to compete patiently and truly understand the sport."

His patience has helped put him in position to secure his first All-American berth, an honor that eluded him a season ago at the national championships where he fell six seconds short of qualifying for

the award.

But hearing how Bliss got to where he is today is what makes him truly special.

Looking back to the fall of 1995, Bliss can still remember his emotions being one of the many new faces in the crowd trying to impress legendary coach Bill Dellinger, who headed Oregon cross country for 32 years before retiring after last season.

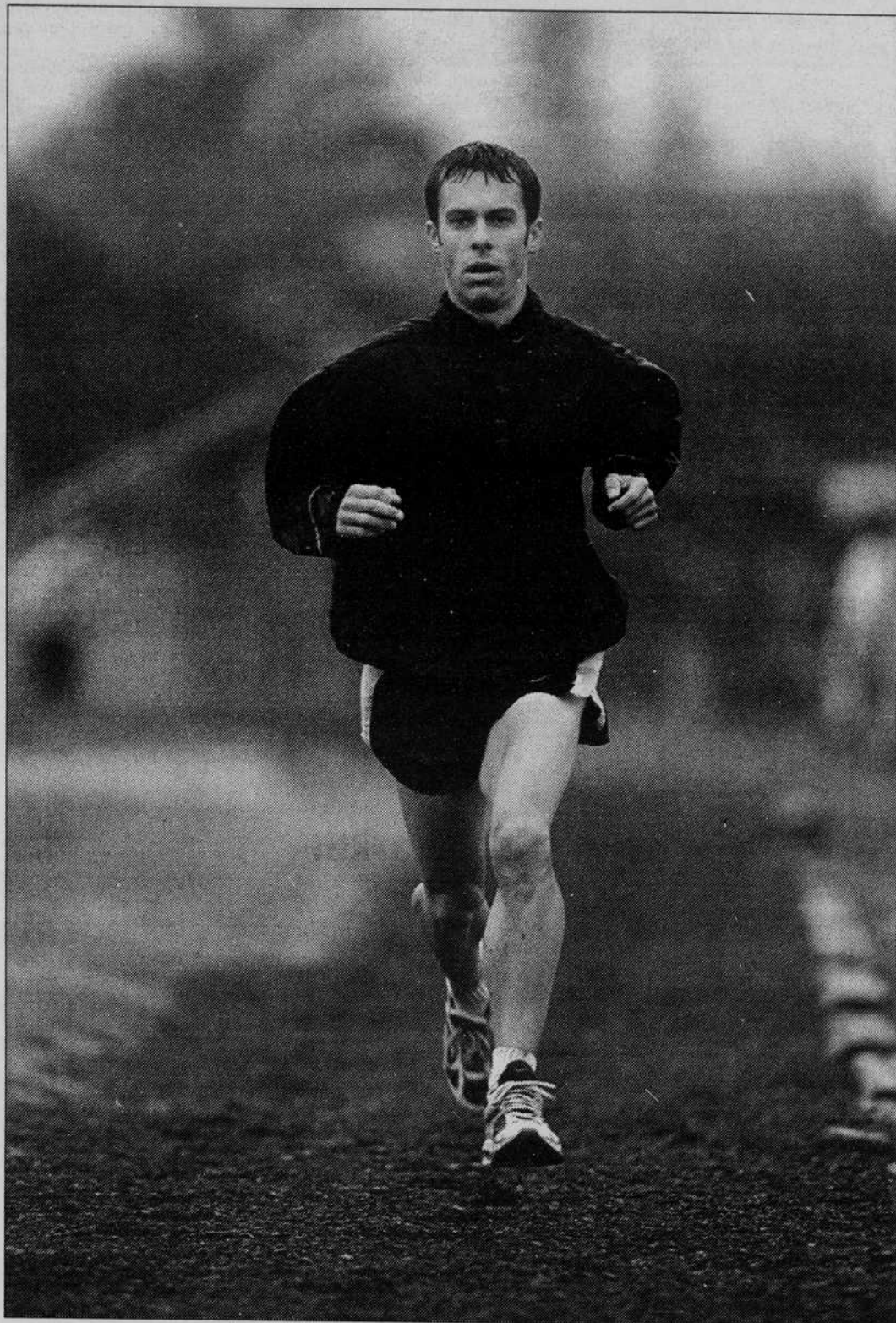
"The whole walk-on experience was really crazy," Bliss said. "It was really hard to get your foot in the door because there were 15 of us freshman, and we were all pretty equal, talent-wise. Dellinger is the type where you have to prove yourself before he even talks to you."

Bliss could have gone elsewhere after graduating from Jesuit High School in Portland, where he finished fifth at the 4A state cross country meet. He had scholarship offers to run at many other schools, but he wanted to run for the Ducks, scholarship or not.

"I was set on Oregon because of the history of the program and because of Coach Dellinger," Bliss said. "I'm from Oregon. I love Oregon, and I could never see myself going out of state. I knew I was going to run four years here, no matter if I sucked or not."

After a redshirt season, Bliss was ready to prove that he didn't "suck," but he wound up watching some more as he

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Senior Andrew Bliss is running for his first All-American award to close out his career.

Scott Barnett Emerald

5-0 Stanford can clinch share of the Pac-10 title

PAC-10 NOTES

■ If the Cardinal wins at Washington and Oregon beats Arizona State, Stanford is assured a tie

By Mirjam Swanson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Everything is so messed up this season. Two preseason football publications — incredibly reliable as they are — predicted that Stanford would finish eighth in the Pacific-10 Conference.

The Sporting News picked the Cardinal last.

Were they ever wrong. Stanford (5-2 overall, 5-0 Pac-10) is in first place. The only team left undefeated in conference play. The only Pac-10 team

that's nationally ranked, at No. 25 in the ESPN/USA Today Poll.

And finally, if Stanford and the Ducks both win this weekend, the Cardinal is ensured at least a share of the Pac-10 crown.

Still, that's easier written than done because Stanford hasn't won at Husky Stadium in 24 years.

Those same prognosticators agreed that UCLA (3-5, 1-4) would finish among the top three.

Wrong again.

The Bruins are where the Cardinal are supposed to be — dead last in the standings.

So unless head coach Bob Toledo can coax his team into an abrupt turnaround, the Bruins will be the second straight team to finish with a losing record the season af

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Tailback Juan-Carlos Lacey and his Stanford teammates could clinch a tie for the Pac-10 title with a win against the Huskies on Saturday.

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