

Oregon Daily  
**Emerald**  
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# Sports

**Best Bet**  
NBA Basketball  
Utah vs. Sacramento  
5 p.m., TNT



## UO runners ready to rock in Regional

■ The return of junior Katie Crabb helps the women in their quest for an at-large bid to the NCAA

By Jeff Smith  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Injuries have plagued her. Her teammates have needed her. Her coach has missed her. She's back.

Just in time for the No. 25 Oregon women's cross country team's most important meet of the season on Saturday — the NCAA Western Regional in Portland — Katie Crabb is coming back from an aggravating Achilles tendon injury.

As the season began, Crabb was looked on to lead the youthful Ducks as the teams top returnee, but things have not gone as planned. The injury forced her to pull out of the Clackamas Open on Sept. 25 and the Pre-NCAAs on Oct. 16, as well as causing her to miss the Pacific-10 Conference Championships on Oct. 30.

The lone race that Crabb has finished came back on Oct. 1 in the Notre Dame Invitational, where she was in line for fifth

place with one mile remaining, but was forced to slow down due to pain and finished 46th place.

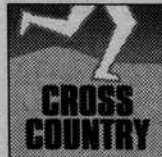
All of that is forgotten now as Crabb is eager to come back and help her team acquire one of the 13 at-large bids for the NCAA Championships that are on the line this weekend in Portland.

"I'm just going to go out there and try to help the team anyway that I can," Crabb said. "It's been really hard for me not to participate especially when you consider that if everything had gone as planned we could have been in the top 10 or better."

"There's a sense of greater strength with Katie in the line-up," head coach Tom Heinonen said. "We have more firepower and maybe a little less pressure for the rest of the girls."

The at-large process is confusing as ever, so Oregon must simply concentrate on running to its ability.

Turn to **Women**, Page 9A



■ With Steve Fein leading the way, the men carry great expectations to Portland for the Western Regional

By Jeff Smith  
Oregon Daily Emerald

One championship race down, two to go. At the beginning of the season, head coach Martin Smith wasn't sure what to expect from his team in his first season at the helm of Oregon cross country.

Sure, he had two-time All-American Steve Fein leading the way, but for the Ducks to accomplish their national championship aspirations they had to rely on fresh-faced newcomers like freshmen Jason Hartmann, Tom Becker and Michael Kasahun, a junior college transfer.

Now, as 11th-ranked Oregon gets set to take part in the NCAA Western Regional Saturday in Portland, Smith has a much better idea of the talent that his team possesses.

"I'm extremely pleased with the way this season has gone," Smith said. "We had a very solid team performance at the Pac-10

meet and that has been an excellent catalyst for the races to come."

Of the field of seven runners that Oregon will bring, Becker is the surprise of the group.

"He's a true freshman and has been one of the guys who have consistently improved throughout the season," Smith said. "He will fill the spot as the seventh runner because he has made some nice strides in his running where we feel he can have a nice, solid performance."

The Western Regionals serve as the most critical race of the season because a berth to the NCAA Championships on Nov. 22 is on the line. Although Oregon has the inside track to receiving one of the 13 at-large bids, a mediocre performance in Portland could be detrimental to the at-large process.

"We treat this meet like it's tournament play," Smith said. "If we do well, we get to move on, and if we don't then we go home."

The top two finishers receive an automatic bid to Nationals, but that will be no easy task as the field includes five teams

Turn to **Men**, Page 9A

## Home exhibition gets excited Ducks started

■ Oregon has a chance to see how much it's improved since an NIT semifinals run last season

By Tim Pyle  
Oregon Daily Emerald

The off-season has been a time of unbridled optimism for the Oregon men's basketball team.

Now we get to see what all the fuss is about.

The Ducks play the first of their two exhibition games tonight at 7:05 p.m. at McArthur Court, taking on the Basketball Travelers, a group of basketball vagabonds that wanders from campus to campus warming up collegiate teams.

Oregon is getting started a week later than most teams, but head coach Ernie Kent said he took advantage of that extra time.

"We like to teach in this program," Kent said, "and not having an exhibition game last week has given us a little more opportunity to bring these guys along"

Just how far the Ducks have come since last season, when they finished 19-13 and made a run to the National Invitation Tournament semifinals, is what Oregon fans are eager to see.

The Ducks have not earned a berth in the NCAA Tournament since 1994-95, but most preseason prognostications have them finishing fourth in the Pacific-10 Conference and advancing to the "Big Dance."

Oregon's perimeter players are often mentioned as the class of the Pac-10, with even ESPN.com ranking the Ducks' backcourt as the league's best. Seniors Darius Wright and Alex Scales lead the outside attack, while junior David Jackson and sophomores Freddie Jones and Anthony Norwood add more firepower and athleticism to the mix.

Jackson is especially excited to play because he had to sit out last season in accordance with NCAA regulations after transferring from Utah.

"Long-time waiting, especially for me," said Jackson, a graduate of Portland's Wil-

### On Tap

**What:** Men's basketball  
**Who:** Oregon vs. Basketball Travelers  
**When:** Tonight, 7:05 p.m.  
**Where:** McArthur Court

son High School."

In his McArthur Court debut, Jackson said he just wants to "play real hard and hopefully make some things happen."

Oregon does plan to get its up-tempo game into gear.

"We're putting our running game together," Jackson said. "We're gonna try to run 'em out the gym, pretty much."

The Oregon frontcourt may be the biggest concern heading into the season, but it also boasts its share of talent.

Senior forward A.D. Smith is perhaps the team's most consistent player, and he is joined by junior center Flo Hartenstein, sophomore center Chris Christoffersen and junior-college transfers Julius Hicks and Bryan Bracey along the front line.

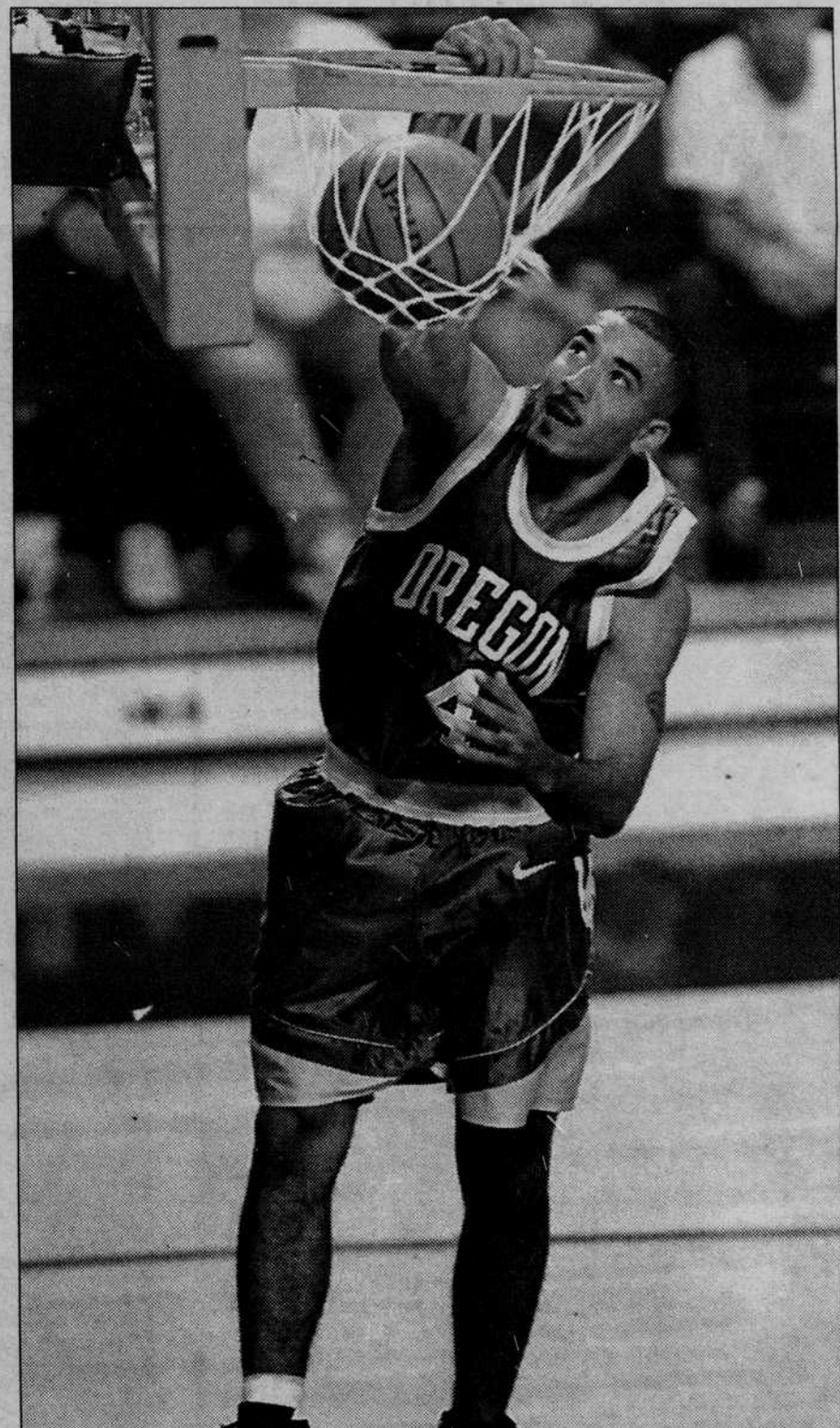
"We'll get a chance to see all these new guys play, and we think they can play," said Smith, a graduate of Eugene's Churchill High. "I think people will be excited about watching them."

Smith and Jackson both admitted that they don't know much about the opposition, but that doesn't really matter. Exhibition games are inevitably about getting a chance for players, new and old, to get comfortable with each other as the regular season rapidly approaches.

"We don't know how competitive of a game it's gonna be, but we're gonna be ready to go," Smith said. "If they're ready to go, we'll have a good game on our hands."

Kent's more than ready to watch and find out what exactly his team needs to work on before its Nov. 23 season opener at Illinois-Chicago.

"I'm anxious and excited just to see them play against another opponent, just to see how we respond," Kent said.



Jeffrey Stockton Emerald

Usually the distributor in Oregon's attack, point guard Darius Wright shows he can finish too.