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Fein

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the championship level, because it usually comes down to a pretty ferocious kick. I think I have a lot of speed right now, but as far as my nature as an athlete, the 5,000 is a better event than the mile is for me." Due to a season-long sinus infection and winter training complications, Fein's only attempt at an NCAA qualifying time in the 5,000 came at the Pac-10 meet. He and Oregon head coach Martin Smith were hoping for a fast race, and for a break in the weather that would allow good running conditions.

The only problems were that: a) conference races are usually slower and more tactical, as this one was, and b) the rain never came, but fierce, gusty winds hindered chances of faster times.

Fein kept himself near the front of the pack, but the pace was too slow early. He took the lead midway through the final lap, but finished in second place, about six seconds short of qualifying in the 5,000.

"I wanted to come out of col-

lege with a national championship," Fein said. "I thought I had a great shot [in the 5,000]. But I don't think that goal is completely out of the picture yet."

Not out of the picture, but tough, nonetheless.

Among the competition Fein

“I wanted to come out of college with a national championship.”

Steve Fein
Oregon runner

will likely face if he makes it to Saturday's final:

- Gabe Jennings, Stanford — arguably the best middle-distance runner in the nation, Jennings ran America's fastest time this year in the Cardinal Invitational's 1,500 on May 5, clocking in at 3 minutes, 37.33 seconds. Jennings holds the 1,500's top seed.

- Michael Stember, Stanford — seeded No. 3, Stember actually has the second-best 1,500 time in the nation at 3:40.54, also from the Cardinal Invitational. He finished third in the Pac-10 meet

with a time of 3:45.20.

- David Kimani, South Alabama — the freshman phenom won the NCAA South Regional cross country championships, then won the individual title at the NCAA Championship meet last November. Kimani is seeded No. 2 in the NCAA 1,500 with a mile-converted time of 3:39.37. Not bad for a freshman.

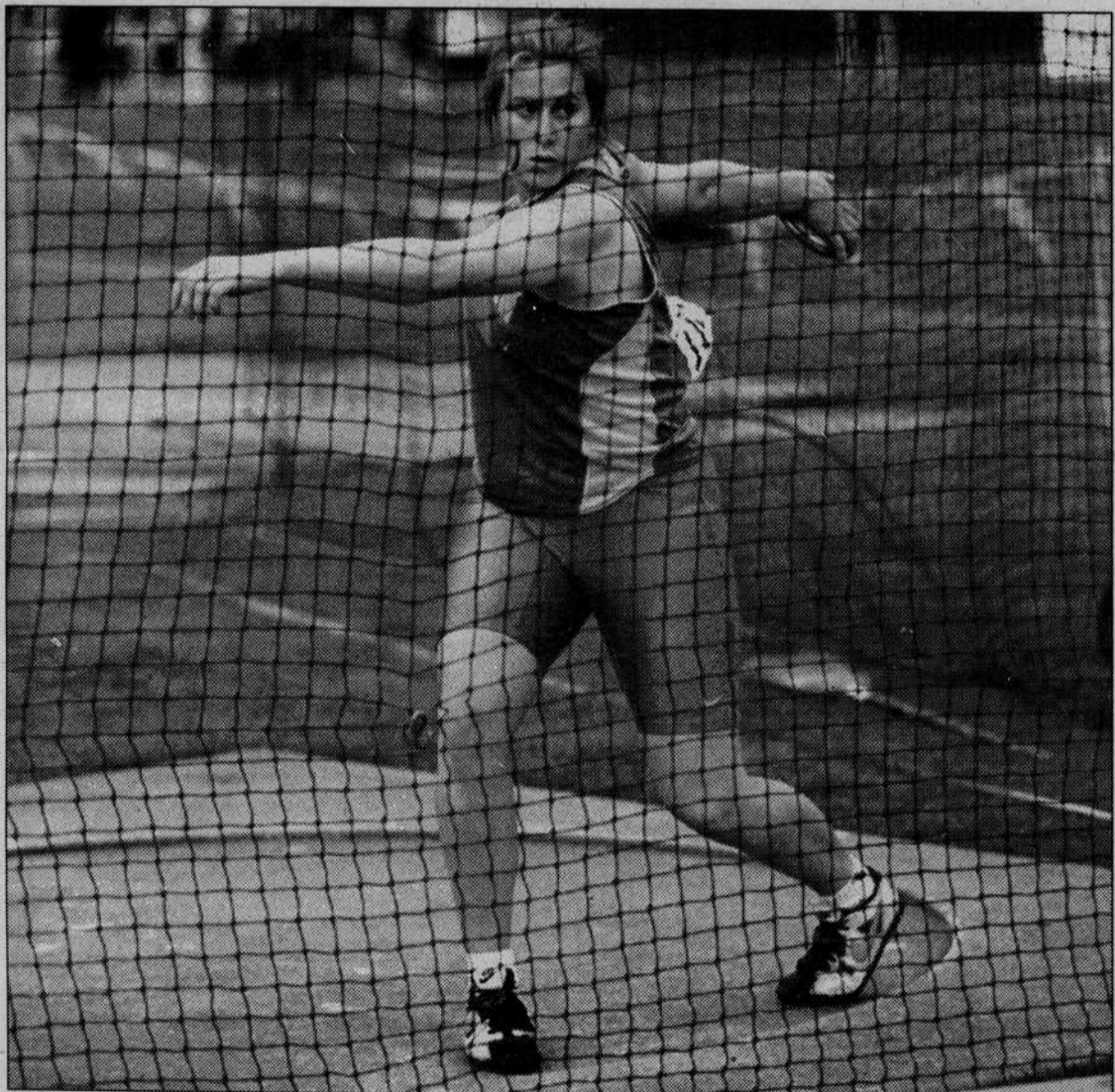
And then, there's Fein.

Fein's mark came when he notched his first-ever sub-4-minute mile at the Oregon Twilight on May 13. Converting that time to the 1,500, the NCAA equivalent event, Fein is seeded sixth with a time of 3:41.31 seconds.

So he's had to modify some of his goals. So he won't be able to run the 5,000. So he missed most of his senior outdoor season.

So what?

"I'll think of track in terms of overcoming struggles," Fein said. "That's a big determiner in how good an athlete is. Good athletes are able to fight through the down times, and step back, and be able to persevere and find your way through those and succeed anyway."



Facing the nation's best could help Mary Etter, Oregon's only freshman representative, produce a top-notch performance.

Women

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But since then, she's been hindered by a nagging knee injury that limited her performance at the Pac-10s, where she no-qualified.

And Mary Etter is the freshman. And freshmen, by definition, are prone to inconsistency. The three-event participant has been both spectacular and, well, not-so-spectacular — sometimes on the same day.

Etter saved her most sensational effort for the final day of the Pac-10s, when she came through with back-to-back personal records in the discus, including her 173-11 mark which gave her the 16th-best mark in the nation and, obviously, qualified her for this weekend's event, taking place on Thursday.

"Mary's unpredictable," Harmon said. "She's kind of bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, but she's

not a naive girl ... she has that anything-goes attitude. So we don't treat her as some seasoned athlete. She knows what she's capable of, but she just doesn't know when it's gonna happen."

The idea now, head coach Tom Heinonen said, is to get all four women competing to their potential.

"They've all struggled at various times during the year," he said. "But we may just have them all going in the same direction in Durham."

Reed has undergone sufficient therapy so she should again be a factor in the pole vault event, Heinonen said. And the environment in Durham figures to assist Etter to find her rhythm.

"She does very well when she's in the face-to-face competition," Harmon said. "She puts the cap on real tight, and she gets ready to fight the big kids."

Crabb shouldn't have to deal with the same blustery weather

conditions that she did at the Pac-10s in Thursday's 1,500 trials or during the finals on Saturday evening. Instead she faces North Carolina's heat and humidity, not completely foreign things to Crabb, a native of Chico, Calif.

Crabb intends to return as an All-American. To do so, she'll have to make the finals and finish among the top eight Americans.

"I'm excited," Crabb said after the Pac-10s, already looking forward to this week's event. "I'm gonna make the finals. If I race like I did today — but in better conditions — it's going to be a faster time."

And Howell probably wants to forget about past injuries and past inconsistencies. She's conceivably hoping she'll be overshadowed on Saturday morning — at least not until her opponents look up at the scoreboard as her event winds down, and see her name up toward the top of the board.