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# Local Olympians head to Sydney

Tracktown USA is sending six medalist hopefuls to the 102nd Olympiad in Australia

By Robbie McCallum for the Emerald

Eugene will be well-represented in next month's Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia. Six former Ducks and Eugene residents have qualified for the Olympics in the track and field portion of the international competition.

Hammer thrower Lance Deal is the only Oregonian in this year's Olympics who owns a medal. Deal was the silver medalist in the hammer at the 1996 Games in Atlanta. This year, Deal is making no predictions about a medal.

"My goal for Sydney is very simple," Deal said in an earlier interview with the Emerald.

"It's to throw a personal record in the final. That means taking care of the technical aspects of the throw. Distance takes care of itself."

Deal's personal best is 270 feet, 11 inches, which is also the Ameri-

can record. The four-time Olympian won this year's Prefontaine Classic with a throw of 262-9, his best throw this year. The Olympics will be Deal's last competition ever.

Former Duck Nick Rogers surprised the crowd at the U.S. Olympic Trials in Sacramento last month with his third place finish in the 5,000 meters.

Coming into the competition as a dark horse at-best, the 22-year-old Rogers tucked in behind favorite Bob Kennedy for most of the race before taking the lead for the final two laps. Rogers was out-kicked by winner Adam Goucher and Stanford's Brad Hauser with 200 meters to go.

Marla Runyan provided the feel-good story of this year's Olympic Trials with her third place finish in the 1,500. Runyan had been hampered by a knee injury all season and considered scratching from the race beforehand, but still managed to qualify in a time of 4:06.4.

The former heptathlete finished behind four-time Olympian Regina Jacobs (4:01.1) and former Eu-

gene resident Suzy Favor Hamilton (4:02.1).

Runyan is the first member of the Olympic team who is legally blind. She suffers from a condition called Stargardt's disease, a macular degeneration syndrome that leaves her with 20/200 vision.

The third former Duck who will compete in Sydney is heptathlete Kelly Blair-LaBounty. She finished third in the seven-event competition despite winning only one event.

Blair-LaBounty tied for first in the long jump and placed third in the 800 and javelin throw and tallied 6,180 points, 163 points behind winner DeeDee Nathan.

Former Oregon runner Karl Keska qualified for the Olympics on Great Britain's team. The former Pacific-10 cross country champion placed third in the 10,000 in the British Trials in July. Keska is ranked 23th in the world among Olympians with a personal best 28:00.5.

The track and field portion of the Olympic Games takes place from Sept. 22 through Oct. 1.

## Pac-10

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biggest question mark that the Trojans have is their running game. Chad Morton is gone, which leaves three candidates to fill his hole. Most likely, the job will belong to sophomore Sultan McCullough, whose brother Saladin was a running back at Oregon just a few years back.

Powerful junior Malaefou MacKenzie will also get his fair share of carries, with true freshman Chris Howard probably being the best true running back on the team.

"Sultan is a real blazer and creates problems when he gets through a hole or around the corner," Hackett said. "We'll utilize all of our tailbacks this season. I really like our mixture of power and speed."

Funny how Hackett adores his running backs, but during this past off-season he expended a lot of effort in trying to recruit tailback Maurice Morris, the top junior-college prospect in the nation.

Morris declined the Trojans, and chose instead to go up north to play for the Ducks, who with Morris on the roster, should be a contender for the conference title.

Oregon is spearheaded by its two-headed quarterback monster in Harrington and A.J. Feeley, who combined for more than 3,000 yards passing last year.

Another Pac-10 team that should contend is UCLA, which is anxious

to get on the field and erase memories of last season's disastrous 4-7 record.

The only problem is that there is still no clear cut starting quarterback for the Bruins. Sophomore Cory Paus was not able to participate in the spring while he recovered from off-season shoulder surgery, but he still seems to have the inside track at the starting gig over 6-foot-4 Ryan McMann, who got about 75 percent of the snaps during spring drills. Also, third-string QB Scott McEwan could provide competition at that position.

But the need for a Cade McNown-type gun slinger isn't as necessary due to the fact that running back DeShaun Foster heads the backfield. Foster will be running behind a monstrous offensive line that should provide him with enough holes to get back the form that he had in 1998 when he was the team's leading rusher as a freshman. He missed most of last season due to an ankle injury.

The Bruins defense should hold up well and it is likely that the Bruins will be the most improved team in the league, but whether that will be good enough to earn a bowl bid remains to be seen.

The wild card team is Oregon State, which has been re-energized by second-year coach Dennis Erickson.

Last season, Erickson led the Beavers to a 7-5 season, which was — get this — their first winning season since 1970.

It was good enough to earn them

an invite to the Oahu Bowl, which marked their first bowl berth since 1964. But now Erickson must prove that last season was no fluke, and he showed he's committed to the city of Corvallis when he signed a new five-year guaranteed contract for more than \$480,000 a year.

In order for the Beavers to stay above the .500 mark for a second straight year, quarterback Jonathan Smith must keep improving and learn to control his touch and accuracy.

"He is the leader of this offense and I look for him to have a great fall," Erickson said. "He worked extremely hard in the winter and in the spring."

Other concerns for Oregon State are the kicking game and the ability of the defensive line to rush the passer, but Erickson says that all problems will be resolved.

"This football team has a chance to be as good as we were a year ago, it just depends on how we develop."

The rest of the five Pac-10 teams — Arizona, Arizona State, Stanford, California and Washington State — can't be overlooked as the unpredictability of the conference will most likely turn a few heads as the season progresses.

But as for the conference as a whole, it is looking to come out smoking against non-conference foes such as Michigan, Wisconsin, Alabama, Texas and Penn State.

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