

# Long road ahead looks just fine for x-country runners

■ New recruits and a core group of returning runners should equate to a sixth straight NCAA appearance for the cross country team

By Robbie McCallum  
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon cross country teams have entered the second phase of Martin Smith and Tom Heinonen's rebuilding process.

Both coaches have added prized recruits to an already talented roster. Both teams are coming off of NCAA appearances last year, with the majority of last year's runners returning.

Seniors Katie Crabb and Rhiannon Glenn and the highly touted 1999 recruiting class all return to lead the women. Crabb, coming off a seventh-place finish in the 1,500 meters at the NCAA track meet in the spring, is in her final year of eligibility.

"Everyone's real excited this year," Crabb said. "It's definitely a smaller group than last year, but that's good in a way. It gives us a chance to get to know each other better and become a family."

Glenn, who had a breakthrough year in 1999, was the Ducks' No. 2 runner for most of last season.

"We've got a good mix of seniors, sophomores and freshmen — with no juniors," Heinonen said. "We've got four seniors and the rest are underclassmen."

Leading the sophomores is Tara Struyk, who was Oregon's No. 3 runner last season. Eri MacDonald and Erinn Gulbrandsen also return after successful freshmen years.

The Ducks were hurt by the loss of sophomore Amy Nickerson, who has left school. Nickerson was Oregon's top runner last season, and led them to an NCAA berth. According to Heinonen, she will spend the year in her home town of Coquille.

Essentially replacing Nickerson will be senior transfer Hanna Smedstad, from Oklahoma State. Smedstad was a three-time All-American for the Cowboys. Last season, Smedstad placed 18th at the NCAA cross country championships, an improvement by ten places over her 1998 finish. The Kent, England, native is working toward her doctorate in neuroscience at the Oregon Graduate School.

Smedstad is "a real solid competitor," Heinonen said. "She can add so much to our team. We're real lucky to have her drop out of the sky for us. She'll add so much to our team as long as she can adapt to the new environment."

Heinonen signed three-time state champion Laura Harmon from Portland's Jesuit High School and Annette Mosey out of St. Mary's High School in Portland.

"We're very happy to have Lauren and Annette," Heinonen said. "If either or both of them can step into our top-seven, that will make us that much more competitive."

The 2000 season will be the first year that the women will run 6,000 meters at championship meets. The primary distance in the past has been 5,000 meters, or just over three miles. The Division I subcommittee of the NCAA Men's and Women's Track and Field Committee voted at their 1997 meeting to extend the length of the women's cross country championships race, effective this year.

"I don't think that there will be a huge difference," Heinonen said. "We'll do longer repetitions at race pace; a little slower, but longer to adjust. Everybody on our team who has been healthy has done more volume in mileage than they've ever done before."

The change in distance doesn't seem to affect the runners, who are simply eager to get the season going.

"I'm sure we'll adjust fine," Glenn said. "For me, it's no big deal. The longer the better."

"I think the lengthening is a good move," Heinonen said. "The women's

[NCAA] meet is getting more competitive each year, and they're not getting spread out. This will help."

On the men's side, All-American sophomore Jason Hartmann is the top returning Duck. Hartmann followed last year's seniors — Steve Fein and Andrew Bliss — to a 37th place finish at the NCAA meet. Hartmann was third among freshmen at that race.

Senior Michael Kasahun also returns. Since transferring to Oregon from Fresno City College, the Ethiopian was Oregon's No. 4 runner last season and the track team's top 10,000 meter runner this spring.

The men's team also had a good recruiting summer. In addition to three prized, in-state recruits, Smith also landed junior transfer Symon Kimata, a Kenyan. Kimata was a NCAA All-American while at South Plains Junior College in Texas. He didn't compete this spring, however, due to transfer regulations.

Freshman Eric Logsdon leads the Duck recruits. The Canby native caused quite a bit of excitement at the 4A state track meet at Hayward



Sophomore Tara Struyk (middle) was the Ducks' No. 3 runner last year and is expected to better her times in 2000.

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Field this past spring when he nearly broke Steve Prefontaine's national high school record in the 3,000 meters. Logsdon came eight seconds shy of the mark in 8:22.

Noel Paulson, a four-time state

champion from Turner, Ore... and Salem native Kyle Robinson also signed with the men. Out of state recruit Aaron Emery, from Croghan, NY, also adds depth.

In addition to Hartmann and

Kasahun, senior Lincoln Nehring and junior Sam Hill return from last year's NCAA qualifying team.

Oregon's opening meet is this Saturday at the Roy Griak Invitational in St. Paul, Minn.

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