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**Kasahun**  
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Sudan. The youngest of the group was Kasahun, who hiked for more than a month to escape the fighting. "I told my father, 'I have to get out of here,'" Kasahun said.

Kasahun and his fellow refugees headed west, hiding from soldiers in the daytime, traveling by night. "We didn't know where we were headed," Kasahun said. "Sometimes we would walk for hours at a time and wind up in the spot we started at. Sometimes we would hide in trucks at night and hide in people's houses in the day."

With thousands of other Ethiopians fleeing the country, Sudan closed the border. The only way Kasahun's party could get in was by hiding in a Land Rover. Despite being separated from his party,

Kasahun made the border crossing and avoided capture by Sudanese soldiers.

Kasahun made his way to Khartoum, where he lived with a family friend. He lived in Sudan for four years, all the while attempting to gain political asylum in America. In 1993, the same year that fighting ended in Ethiopia, Kasahun was granted asylum.

The Catholic Church paid for Kasahun's flight from Sudan to Cairo, to Athens, to London, to New York and finally to San Francisco. Kasahun lived with his sister in Fresno, Calif.

Despite knowing little English, Kasahun went through immersion courses and took mainstream classes in American schools.

"I had to do more studying, more reading, but I learned that language quickly," he said.

He found his stroke in running in physical education classes at Fresno High. The PE teacher, who was also the sprinting coach for the track team, encouraged Kasahun to participate in track.

Kasahun found his calling and ran the mile and the two-mile for the team. In the fall, he left the soccer team to run cross country. Three years later, he was the CIF State Champion.

In 1996, Kasahun became the first member of his family to graduate from high school.

Kasahun continued his running success at Fresno City College, where he was the top runner for the Rams during his freshman and sophomore years. In 1998, he completed the distance runners sweep, winning the California Junior College cross country championship, followed by titles in the 5,000 and 10,000 meters in track.

In the summer of 1999, Kasahun returned to Ethiopia for the first time in 12 years.

"It was very emotional," Kasahun said. "It brought tears to my eyes to see my family after 12 years. People change so much in that time. They were all surprised to see that I had grown so much."

His accomplishments raised eyebrows of Division I coaches all along the West Coast. One coach in particular was Martin Smith, who envisioned Kasahun fitting nicely

into his future plans.

"I took a trip up [to Eugene] and the decision was obvious," Kasahun said. "It was a really good community, the best in the country. I looked at other schools but decided to be a part of the Ducks."

Last year, Kasahun joined the Oregon cross country team and made an immediate impact on the team's top-five. Kasahun was the Ducks' fourth runner all season and helped lead the team to a third-place finish in the Pacific-10 Conference and a sixth-place finish at the NCAA meet.

Kasahun's biggest contribution was yet to come. After making significant improvements in the 2000 track campaign, Kasahun began his extensive summer training regimen.

"Over the summer I did a lot of training," Kasahun said. "I took a week-long break, then increased my mileage to 90-plus miles per week. As you get older, you get stronger, and maturity has an effect too."

Kasahun's new focus was evident in the Ducks' season-opening meet at the Roy Griak Invitational September 23. Kasahun was the top Oregon runner and finished 13th out of 219 participants in a personal best time of 24 minutes, 48 seconds.

"Mike has obviously made substantial improvements this season," Smith said. "He made excellent progress last track season, followed by laying down a great base over the summer. A lot of his improvements have come from getting comfortable in a new home and gaining more confidence."

Kasahun has not dropped off since, either matching or recording new personal bests in three following meets.

"I am very pleased so far," Kasahun said. "I am pleased with myself and the team and the way that we have been improving."

At the end of the 2001 track season, Kasahun will have used all his eligibility, and his two-year stay at Oregon will come to a close.

"Athletics have given me the chance to attend a university and earn a degree," he said. "I pray that my father will be alive when I get my degree. I just want him to see what I have accomplished."

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**Volleyball**  
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work as hard as we can. It would definitely be nice to end [home court play] with a win."

Despite the team's losing its last four conference matches, which were against the top four teams in the Pac-10, head coach Carl Ferreira is pleased with how his team has reacted.

"This group could've hung their heads and starting sulking a long time ago," Ferreira said. "But our theme is to play hard today and prepare for tomorrow. And it's great that we're playing our best toward the latter part of the year."

"Find me another team in the country with only one conference win that is as passionate as we are. It's just awesome."

Washington (6-16, 1-13) picked up its only conference victory against the Ducks in Seattle Oct. 13. The Huskies have not, however, won a match since.

Junior hitter Allison Richardson and sophomore hitter Paige Benjamin have been leading the Huskies' offensive attack. Richardson has averaged 4.33 kills and a .403 attack percentage in the last five matches. In last week's 3-2 loss to Stanford, the duo combined for 45 kills.

While containing the Washington attack is key, Banducci said the Ducks are more focused on what's happening on their side of the net.

"It's important for us to maintain our ability to sustain a high level of play," Banducci said. "We've had a great week of practice. We've been extremely competitive and have been working extremely hard."

In the final home match of the season, Washington State (15-8, 6-8) heads into Mac Court looking to sweep Oregon for the ninth straight year.

The Cougars, a 3-0 winner in this year's first meeting against the Ducks, are second in the Pac-10 with 18.41 kills per game, led by sophomore LaToya Harris. In the Cougars' upset of No. 17 Stanford last week, Harris tallied 18 kills and 16 digs and three service aces en route to being named the Pac-10 player of the week.

**Notes**

On the year, Oregon is averaging just 13 kills per game, worst in the Pac-10. Washington is ninth with 15 kills per game.

Washington junior setter Britni Churnside, a Sheldon High School graduate, will be making her third homecoming appearance at Mac Court. With Churnside on the roster, the Huskies are 2-0 in Eugene.

No. 3 Arizona puts its undefeated road record on the line when it heads to Los Angeles to take on No. 6 USC. In the Pac-10 standings, the Wildcats sit one game ahead of the Women of Troy, who have yet to lose this year on their home court.



**Design Contest**

Tomorrow is the deadline to enter artwork for the **World AIDS Day** greeting card contest.

All net proceeds from the sale of the cards will benefit **HIV Alliance**

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