

Cross country

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Third-ranked Arkansas placed five runners in the top-25 to win its third straight, and 11th overall, national title.

Heads were shaking at the Oregon camp after the women's race as the Ducks placed 28th, the school's worst-ever finish at nationals.

"Before the race, I told them to run smart, run tough and try to forget about the conditions, but that was pretty difficult to do," Heinonen said.

Oregon's top three runners, all of whom are seniors, ran their last races in Oregon uniforms.

Senior transfer Hanna Smedstad, Oregon's top runner, had an off race, finishing 64th in a time of 21:38 over the 6,000-meter course.

"It wasn't a very good day, and I didn't run well," Smedstad said. "This is the worst conditions I've raced in."

Smedstad, a two-time All-Amer-

ican, placed 18th and 28th in the last two NCAA meets for Oklahoma State.

Senior Rhiannon Glenn was the next Duck to the finish line, plac-

“ This is tough cross country weather and if you weren't mentally prepared and mentally strong enough, it could have a major impact.

Martin Smith
head coach,
Oregon men's cross
country



ing 153rd in a time of 22:25.

"I had tight on and still never warmed up out there," Glenn said.

"I never broke a sweat, and still didn't 30 minutes later when I had all my race gear still on and was inside. It was pretty bad out there."

Senior Katie Crabb, usually the



Geoff Thurner Oregon Media Services

Rhiannon Glenn (160) capped her Oregon cross country career Monday at the NCAA Championships.

team's second runner, finished 176th in a time of 22:38. Crabb placed 114th at last year's national meet.

Sophomore Eri MacDonald and freshman Laura Harmon rounded out Oregon's scorers in 194th and 196th place, respectively (22:50 and 22:51). Harmon has been battling a cold the past week.

Sophomore transfer Carrie Zografos had one of the better races for the women. Although Zografos was 37 seconds off her personal best, she improved her place from the Pre-NCAA meet Oct. 14 on the same course by 84 places.

Sophomore Erinn Gulbrandsen rounded out the Oregon contingent with a 240th-place finish in a

time of 24:06.

Top-ranked Colorado swept team and individual honors. Buffalo senior Kara Grgas-Wheeler won the race in a time of 20:30, seven seconds ahead of runner-up Sabrina Monro of Montana. Colorado placed five runners in the top-50 to capture the national championship.

Pesznecker

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And if you thought the football team had destiny on its side, how about the women's cross country team?

After struggling with poor fin-

ishes in the increased 6,000-meter race format, the Harriers pulled it together in the Western Regionals two weeks ago to earn a coveted at-large NCAA bid. Don't tell me it wasn't fate that brought All-American transfer Hanna Smedstad into the mix to run alongside senior Katie Crabb.

Sure, the Ducks didn't do too well at the NCAA Championships, but the bottom line is that they got there.

Want another reason? How about the men's basketball team?

Losing to Athletes in Action was not a huge deal; after all, those guys have been playing hoops

their whole lives.

The important thing is that head coach Ernie Kent has a core group of players that will be pretty dang good three years from now. Who knows, they may even surprise themselves this season.

Not to mention thunderous dunks a la Bryan Bracey are always fun to watch.

Let's see, what else is out there — got it! How could I write a column to cheer up Oregon fans without talking about the volleyball team?

Now I know what you're thinking, that I'm being sarcastic, but I'm not. Truth is, this team got better and better as the season went on, despite a letdown in its final match.

I watched a game earlier in the season, and it wasn't great. I watched one later in the season, a win against Washington, and walked away thinking that new coach Carl Ferreira was on to something. While the task of lifting Oregon volleyball to par with the Stanfords and UCLAs is monumental, maybe, in time, he'll be the guy who does it.

No matter how Ferreira's quest ends, it should be inspiring to watch.

There's so much more I could write about, too. The wrestling team has senior Chael Sonnen back in its ranks, and anything less than an NCAA title would be dis-

appointing for him. Softball went to the NCAA Tournament last year and is on the upswing. The club hockey team overcame the tragic loss of a teammate last season and is off to a good start. The tennis team has a new facility behind the Student Recreation Center.

So you see? There are plenty of reasons to be a Duck.

Yes, there are even reasons to be an Oregon football fan. If you thought this season was dramatic, think about how huge next season will be, when Wisconsin comes to Autzen Stadium, when a revitalized Southern California team visits Autzen, when bitter Arizona State comes to Autzen, and finally, when the Beavers venture into Autzen.

To say the least, it should be a good year for season-ticket holders.

Anyway, a final message to all you Duck fans out there: Times may seem bleak and unfair, but don't worry too much. You've got more to cheer about than most other schools, including a certain university located 45 miles northwest.

Before you know it, you won't be so distraught that your team isn't going to the Rose Bowl, and being an Oregon fan will seem right as rain.

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Standings

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age, 1.43 for computer-rank average, 0.52 for strength of schedule and zero for losses. The Sooners beat Texas Tech 27-13 on Saturday.

Florida State had 5.55 points — 3 for poll average, 1.43 for computer-rank average, 0.52 for strength of schedule and 1 for losses.

Miami had 6.06 points — 2 for poll average, 2.86 for computer-rank average, 0.20 for strength of schedule and 1 for losses. If Miami beats Boston College and doesn't play in the Orange Bowl, the Hurricanes could end up in the Fiesta Bowl in a possible matchup against Notre Dame.

Washington (10-1), meanwhile, moved up to fourth place with 10.46 points. If Oklahoma and Miami both lose, then the Rose Bowl-

bound Huskies could move into the Orange Bowl picture. Miami's only loss was to the Huskies, 34-29, in September.

The BCS was created two years ago to come up with a national title game without instituting a playoff. After the top two teams are decided, the remaining BCS games — the Rose, Sugar and Fiesta bowls — select from the remaining pool of qualified teams.

Four conference champions have clinched BCS berths as automatic qualifiers: Florida State (ACC), Miami (Big East), Purdue (Big Ten) and Washington (Pac-10). The other automatic qualifiers are the winners of the Big 12 (Oklahoma vs. Kansas State) and SEC (Florida vs. Auburn) title games on Dec. 2. Teams under consideration for the two at-large bids are Notre Dame (8-2), Oregon State (10-1) and Virginia Tech (9-1).



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