



Time for track to receive its proper respect



TWO MINUTES FOR CROSSCHECKING

PETER HOCKADAY

I have something growing on me, and I can't get it off. I feel like I'm in the Matrix, and that silver stuff is crawling up my arm, just waiting to swallow me whole. You see, I'm a baseball-basketball-football-hockey guy. I watch NHL 2Night and read the box scores every day. I like my sports organized, with a large dose of head-to-head competition.

So when I found out that I was covering the Oregon women's track and field team this spring, my heart plunged down to my ankles. I was hoping for softball, spring football or even club ultimate frisbee, which would have been a more organized team, and therefore better in my opinion at the time.

But this "un-team" called Oregon track is growing on me. If you could hear the immense pride that wells up in sprints coach Mark Stream's voice when he talks about his athletes, it would grow on you, too. If you could see the mischievous little glint in head coach Tom Heinonen's eye when one of his Ducks crushes her competition, it would grow on you.

There are many reasons to love the Oregon track and field team. There's the Hayward Field atmosphere, which accommodates both the casual passer-by and the intense track guru. There's the storied history, riddled with recognizable names such as Prefontaine, Bowerman and Dellinger.

There are the legendary meets. Last year's Prefontaine Classic made Sports Illustrated and this May's Classic will too. So will June's USA Championships, and probably the May 30-June 2 NCAA Championships.

Then there are the athletes themselves. Most track stars are not groomed for the media. Many won't sign any multi-million dollar deals in their careers. They run, jump and throw because they want to, period.

Just try and ask Oregon's Niki Reed whether she's looking forward to the NCAA Championships at Hayward Field after she became the first Duck to officially qualify for that meet. She'll tell you she has "big plans."

Chat with Mary Etter, who won the discus and shot put at the Washington Dual Saturday, and she'll tell you her goal is to set a school record in one of those events this year.

Talk to long jumper Amanda Brown, and she'll tell you she might jump 21 feet by the end of the season, which would be almost two feet past her current personal best.

Not that track athletes are egotistical, they just tell it like they see it. Sure, every basketball player would love to win March Madness. Every football player wants to get to the Rose Bowl, only they won't tell you. They take things "one game at a time."

Unfortunately, most of the student population doesn't share my newfound enthusiasm for the track oval. I admit, until a few weeks ago I couldn't tell a PR from a 100 from a high jump myself.

But, as I said, Hayward Field is just as inviting to the track knucklehead as the track genius. By simply watching Hanna Smedstad kick over the final 200 meters of the 1,500, or Jenny Brogdon clear 5-7 in the high jump, or the rhythmic clapping from the crowd as Amanda Brown takes off down the long-jump runway, you can partake in the Hayward tradition. Not to mention that the bleachers are a perfect place to work on that spring tan.

In a few months, even the average sports fan will know the names coming through Hayward. Marion Jones, Michael Johnson and others will compete in the Prefontaine Classic in late May. You don't need to be a track nut to know those names.

Track is a drastically overlooked sport. Not by the community, which supports the tradition unconditionally, but by Oregon students. For those of you starving for sports in the spring, you might want to wander over to Hayward Field.

Give track a chance. It might just grow on you.

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Tom Patterson Emerald

Eight seasons at the helm of the Oregon women's basketball program have made Jody Runge the most successful coach in Oregon basketball history. But Runge, 38, may have seen her last days at McArthur Court. The results of an investigation of the program have yet to be announced.

All alone and waiting

To say that the Jody Runge era has had its ups and downs would be an understatement

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

Turmoil. Chaos. Disaster. Whatever you choose to call it, something — or perhaps, in many minds, someone — is obviously not quite right with the Oregon women's basketball program.

The problems have escalated since eight players met with Oregon Athletic Director Bill Moos March 4 to request that Jody Runge, the most successful coach in Oregon basketball history, be fired. And the light at the end of the tunnel is only getting dimmer.

Moos called upon Kansas-based law firm Bond, Schoeneck & King, known for its internal handling of collegiate sports programs, to conduct an evaluation of Runge and her program. Since the team began March 27, more than 80 people involved with the program since Runge's arrival in 1993 have been interviewed, including Runge.

But the investigators have yet to report their findings to Moos.

Many have speculated that the Athletic Department is merely searching until it finds an excuse to fire the controversial coach.

The Oregonian reported last week that the investigators looked into an incident in which a former Duck assistant was accused of slapping a former player during a practice in the 1995-96 season. Former player Elsa Oliveira said Kelly Kebe, now an assistant at Iowa State, slapped her during a shooting drill.

Kebe denied the accusation.

Oliveira said she is more upset with how Runge handled the incident. That is, Oliveira said Runge did not "acknowledge that it was inappropriate."

"When it occurred, it took me by surprise. But my gripe was not with the way coach Kebe handled the situation," Oliveira told The Associated Press.

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“The situation at Oregon is chaotic at best.”

Bill Fennelly
head coach
Iowa State

”

UO volleyball earns national title

The Oregon club team survives some close calls and pulls off a few upsets on its way to the prestigious championship

By Jesse Thomas
for the Emerald

The Oregon club women's volleyball team can now call itself the best of the best after being crowned national champion last weekend at the National Intercollegiate Recreation Sports Association Nationals tournament.

The team members traveled to Kansas City, Kan., and came face-to-face with the reality that their ultimate goal was finally at their fingertips. Oregon was familiar

with the elite setting as it placed 15th last season at nationals and entered this year's tournament ranked 39th out of 48 teams.



proved to everybody how good of a team they are."

Oregon began its tournament run with pool play Thursday, where the team won three games with no difficulties. It then faced Texas, the defending national champion, on Friday, but Oregon prevailed and advanced onward to beat Florida.

Oregon ran into difficulty against Washington State after losing the first two games of the match but battled back to capture the win and then took care of Kentucky to play Purdue in the finals.

"Our team was very confident that we were supposed to be there," coordinator Stacey Terry said. "We were there to prove we were going to be national champs."

The women started slow against Purdue by barely losing game one, 24-26. In game two they again ran into trouble and found themselves down 12-3. But they were not about to give in and fought back to win, 27-25. In the third and final game, Oregon played with all its heart to edge the Boilermakers, 16-14, to capture the

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