



Ichiro-mania is hard to avoid



HAKUNA MATATA

JEFF SMITH

EEEE-CHIII-ROOO!"

The deafening screams pierce my ears as the Seattle Mariners' newest sensation steps to the plate for the first time.

In the upper deck, along the third-base line, a sign reads: "A-Rod + Junior = Ichiro."

In the center-field bleachers, three Japanese men frantically wave their home country's flag, while another group of supporters flashes signs with Japanese lettering that probably mean something like: "Ichiro is God's cousin."

And over the loudspeakers, instead of some new-age rock or rap music that most hitters choose to play when they bat, some funky rap song with only one word blasts out to the sold-out Safeco Field crowd of Mariners supporters.

That one word, of course, is Ichiro. Except it's sung like some early 1990s M.C. Hammer song. "I-I-I-chi-ro!" (It reminded me of, "Too-too-tootsie Roll!")

I was beginning to have an Ichiro headache, and it was only the bottom of the first inning.

The sports staff here at the Emerald decided to take a little baseball road trip this past weekend and went up to Seattle to catch Friday's and Saturday's Mariners-Yankees games. Now, since my traveling companions are all Seattle fans, I knew I could poke a little fun at their newfound hero and predict failure for the invincible Ichiro.

"He's going 0-for-4, guys. No question."

"Shut up, Jeff. Ichiro's the man. He never misses a pitch."

At the time, Ichiro was riding a 22-game hitting streak that had swept over Seattle like Starbucks shops and had people fantasizing about his breaking the great Joe Dimaggio's mark of 56 games.

I had nothing against Ichiro, whose last name, Suzuki, is practically non-existent. He'd been more than impressive on the occasions I'd seen him on television, but I was getting a little Ichiro-ed out. ESPN would always devote more than its share of coverage to the guy and Sports Illustrated made sure to jump on the Ichiro bandwagon and blow him up as much as possible.

Ichiro's first at-bat Friday was a ground-out. But then he came up again in the second and laced a single to center that continued his hit streak and ignited Ichiro-mania.

He tacked on a fifth-inning single and an RBI double in the seventh for his seventh straight multi-hit game at the time, pushing his major league leading hit total to 72.

That's not even to mention his two blink-and-you'll-miss-them steals (he leads the league with 15) and his cannon of an arm that he displayed on numerous occasions.

Even though the Mariners and Yankees combined to score 24 runs — the most ever in Safeco Field — in New York's 14-10 victory, the play of Ichiro had caught my eye. But I wouldn't admit it to my fellow staffers.

"He's got to prove he can play in back-to-back games. He's going 0-for-4 tomorrow."

But you know what? As I sat in Safeco on Saturday, I noticed something weird. When Ichiro came to the plate, my head began bobbing to the tune of the Ichiro rap.

But Ichiro popped up.

Then he grounded out.

Then he struck out (gasp!).

Then he got beamed in the back.

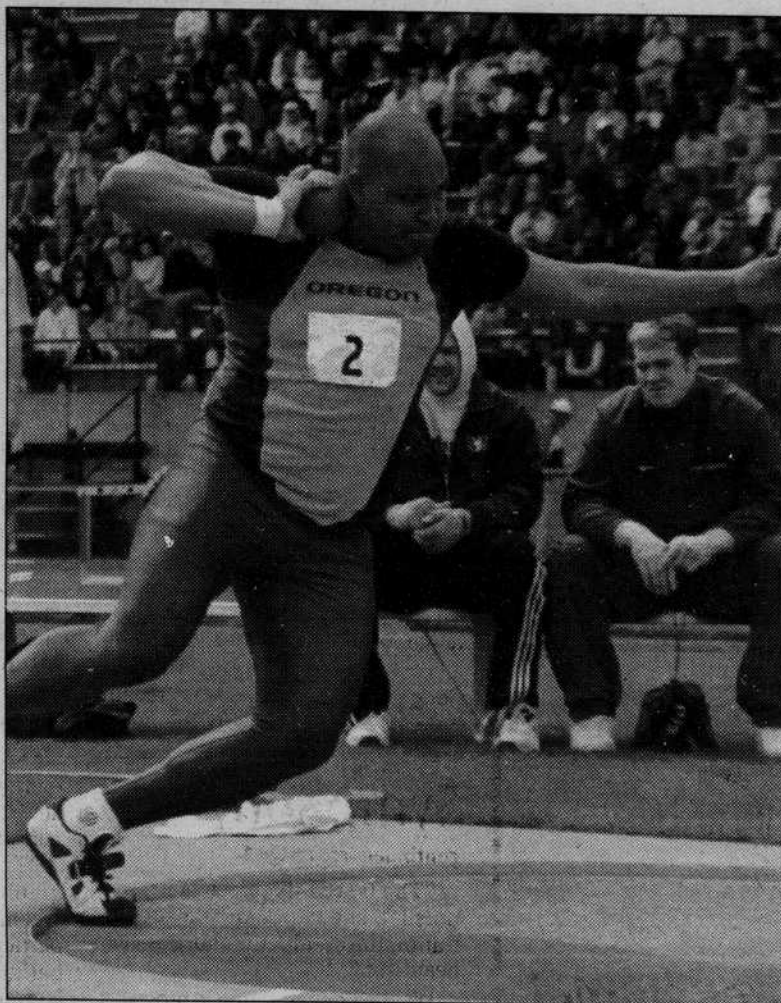
Then, in the bottom of the 10th, with the Yankees leading 2-1 and the crowd roaring for Ichiro to extend his streak, he grounded out to Derek Jeter to end the streak at 23.

My companions glared at me and asked, "Are you happy now, Jeff?"

I should have said yes. I should have relished the disappointment in their faces and shot back an evil smile.

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Ducks hope to make the cut



Tom Patterson Emerald

Oregon's John Bello is hoping to make the NCAAs in the shot put, where he is ranked 23rd.

■ Oregon's seven NCAA hopefuls anxiously await word of their postseason fate, which will be announced today

By **Robbie McCallum**
Oregon Daily Emerald

If there's one thing about Oregon athletics that's guaranteed, it's that they always make it exciting. The Oregon men's track and field team is no different.

The Ducks' final marks are in and their postseason hopes rest solely on the NCAA selection committee's decision today at 4 p.m., when the committee announces who is in and who is out of the NCAA Championships, being held next Wednesday through Saturday at Hayward Field.

Ten Ducks have posted NCAA qualifying marks this season, but only three of those are automatic. The remaining Oregon athletes lie on the NCAA "bubble." The selection committee will accept the top 16 athletes in each event, plus some additional at-large bids. A total of 388 athletes are selected, which boils down to about 19 per event.

Junior Santiago Lorenzo, sophomore Turn to Men's, page 10



Track dreams become reality today

■ Some Oregon athletes will find out today whether or not they're going to the NCAA Championships next week

By **Peter Hockaday**
Oregon Daily Emerald

There are three dreams being played out in the heads of the Oregon women's track and field team right now.

The first dream is shared by those Ducks who have no shot at making it to the NCAA Championships at Hayward Field next week. These athletes dream of next season.

Then there are the stars, the Ducks who will have legitimate shots at winning NCAA titles next week. These

athletes dream of throwing long, running hard and beating their fields.

The last group is the "bubble" athletes, those Ducks who may or may not compete in the NCAAs. There are a handful of Oregon athletes on the NCAA provisional list, who didn't know whether or not to practice this week. Today, they'll know.

Today, the NCAA committee will decide how large each event will be, depending on how tough the marks are in each event. For some Oregon athletes, the announcement will end their season. For some, it will extend their season one more week.



Some of the Oregon athletes who

will hold their collective breath this afternoon are senior Maureen Morrison (36th in the hammer), sophomore Charyl Weingarten (21st in the javelin), senior Hanna Smedstad (30th in the 10,000) and sophomore Eri Macdonald (33rd in the 800). Pole vaulters Georgette Moyle (44th), Kirsten Riley (45th) and Holly Speight (46th) will also wait with bated breath.

As for the stars, freshman Sarah Malone (2nd in the javelin), sophomore Mary Etter (10th in the discus) and junior Niki Reed (10th in the pole vault) already know they will compete next week.

The NCAA selection committee will announce its decisions at 4 p.m. today.

Runyan ready to run Pre Classic 3,000

■ Eugene resident Marla Runyan, who discovered her distance ability at the Pre Classic, wants a record this time around

By **Peter Hockaday**
Oregon Daily Emerald

Marla Runyan has a lot invested in the Prefontaine Classic.

The Eugene resident Olympian, who announced that she would race in the Pre 3,000 meters this year, got her big break at the 1999 Pre Classic.

It was there that Runyan raced in the 1,500 meters for the first time, when the field was too crowded in the 800. She had originally been a heptathlete and a middle-distance runner.

Shortly after that race, Runyan made the 1999 World Championships team

in the 1,500, then raced in last summer's Sydney Olympics, where she finished eighth.

Now, Runyan says, she might be even better than she was last summer.

"I'm really in great shape right now," Runyan said. "I think I can come close to the record."

The Pre Classic meet record in the 3,000 is 8:39.33, set by Ireland's Sonia O'Sullivan in 1996.

Runyan will face stiff competition for the record as well as for the title of hometown favorite.

Former Duck and ex-Olympian An-

nette Peters will square off with Runyan Sunday, as will Eugene native Clare Taylor, who won this year's 5,000 at the Oregon Twilight. Taylor's time in that event was the fastest American time this year.

Also entered in the Pre 3,000 are two more 2000 U.S. Olympians, Elva Dryer and Jen Rhines. Dryer raced in the 5,000 in Sydney, while Rhines competed in the 10,000. Collette Liss, who raced in the Twilight 5,000, will make another appearance at the Pre. British runner Kathy Butler, who won the 3,000 at Hayward Field in the 1996 NCAA Championships, rounds out the field.

The Prefontaine Classic starts at 11:45 a.m. Sunday, and the women's 3,000 is tentatively scheduled for 1:10 p.m.