

# Women's track eyes future

■ Despite a young team, Oregon had high hopes for this season that were not met

By Peter Hockaday  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Oregon women's track and field was once synonymous with success and dominance.

From 1981-85, the Ducks won the Pacific-10 Conference every year and finished in the top five at the NCAA Championships, even winning the national title in 1985.

This year, as the Ducks were in the middle of rebuilding, Oregon hit the opposite end of the success spectrum.

The Ducks finished eighth in the Pac-10, not their worst-ever finish, but very close to last season's last-place showing. Then, at the NCAA meet — at Hayward Field, no less — Oregon scored only two points and finished 60th overall in the country.

It was the Ducks' worst showing since they failed to send any athletes to the meet in 1986. "We had hoped for more at the NAAs," Oregon head coach Tom Heinonen said.

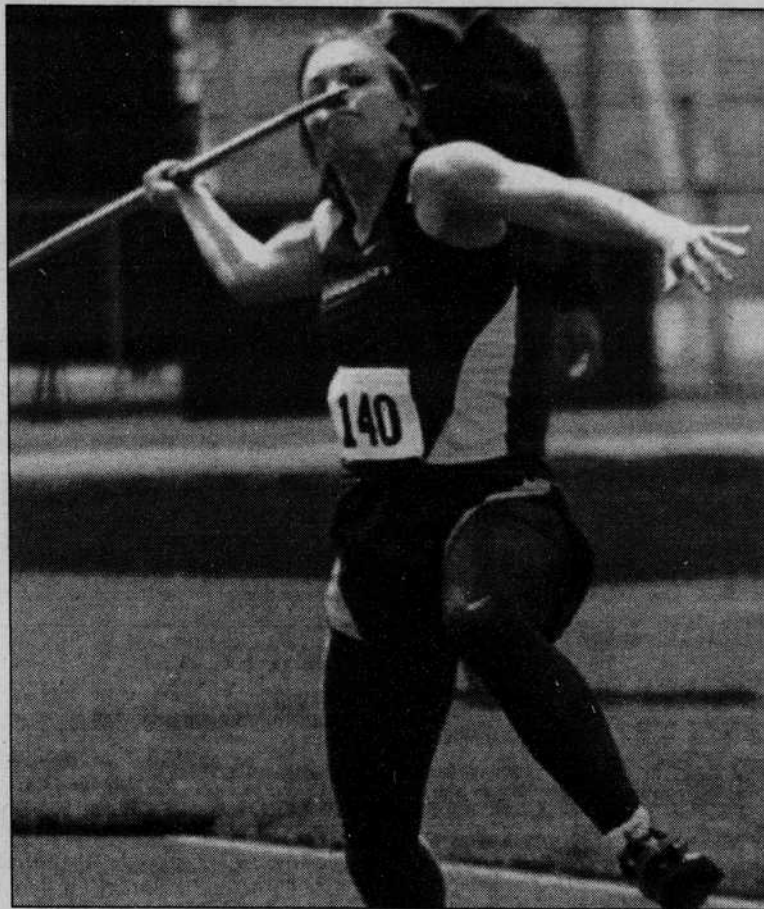
So how does Heinonen measure a season filled with disappointment, low scores and shattered dreams?

"I think we made what people might view as small strides towards success," Heinonen said. "There were significant things that happened, that those inside the program know we're poised to make a much bigger stride soon."

The future is relatively bright for the team. A slew of new recruits — especially in the field events — should continue to build on the Ducks' newfound field success.

And this year's team is young, without a doubt. Of the four athletes who qualified for the NCAA Championships, one was a freshman, two were sophomores and one was a junior. Heinonen said he takes comfort in knowing those four will only be more mature next year.

Mary Etter, a sophomore discus thrower, was one of those



Adam Amato Emerald

Oregon's Charyl Weingarten is one of the many Ducks with high hopes for next year.

four athletes who should come back stronger next year.

"It was a big shock," said Etter, who didn't make the finals in her event. "When you go through 11 months of rigorous training and all those meets, you don't expect that. Next year, I'll probably prepare a little more."

Niki Reed, who also didn't make the finals of the pole vault despite being ranked 10th in the nation heading in, said she will redshirt next year's outdoor season.

Other top returners include Sarah Malone and Charyl Weingarten in the javelin, Jordan McDaniels in the throwing events, Eri Macdonald in the distances, Ann Sullivan in the hurdles and Amanda Brown in the long jump. Of that group, Malone and Weingarten are the only athletes with NCAA Championship experience.

Malone and Reed are the only two Oregon athletes with a little season left. The pair of performers will compete at the U.S.A. Track and Field Championships

in Eugene in two weeks. Reed said she is looking forward to the event.

"It's another big meet to try and do well at," Reed said. "It's encouraging to see other women jumping 14 and 15 feet. It lets me know it's possible to do it."

Etter's season best is just short of the qualifying mark for U.S.A. meet, but she still may get a chance to compete.

While it's hard to measure team success on the track, this season Oregon undoubtedly failed the team test. Weak showings at the Pac-10s and NAAs made the message clear for the Ducks: Rebuilding takes its toll.

"It's easy to talk about getting back on track," Heinonen said. "Now we've got to go out and show what we're capable of. I think there's some determination there to do that."

Oregon will host the U.S.A. Championships June 21-24 before preparing for next fall's cross country season.

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