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# Men's track excelled in 2001

■ The 2001 season was one of the most successful in recent years for the Oregon men

By Robbie McCallum  
Oregon Daily Emerald

It will be known as the breakthrough year. It was the year the Ducks made their return back to the track and field elite.

The 2001 Oregon men's track and field season was exciting from start to finish.

It all began last fall when Track and Field News magazine called coach Martin Smith's recruiting class one of the best in the country.

Hayward Field fans got an early taste of things to come at the Oregon Preview on March 17. Redshirt sophomore John Stiegeler uncorked the nation's best throw at 236 feet, three inches, and never looked back from there. Four personal bests and two-and-a-half months later, Stiegeler was a national champion

— Oregon's first since 1992.

Junior transfer Micah Harris made his debut in an Oregon uniform that day, running the seventh-best 110 hurdle time in school history. Over the season, Harris climbed the Duck record book and eventually became the school record holder at 13.73 seconds.

Three weeks later, junior Santiago Lorenzo competed in the first of only three decathlon competitions of his season at the Texas Relays, where he captured first-place.

At the NCAAs, Lorenzo did it again. The Buenos Aires native outkicked Tennessee's Stephen Harris and Georgia's David Lemen to climb from third to first for Oregon's second title of the meet.

Redshirt freshman Jason Hartmann competed in his trademark event only twice during the season: earning an NCAA qualifying mark in 10,000 meters at Stanford and at the NCAAs. Hartmann ran an inspired race, finishing third for his

third All-American honor.

The Ducks were the only team in Oregon athletics to go undefeated. Oregon defeated Washington 87-75 in its only dual meet of the season.

One of Smith's goals before the season was to finish in the top half at the Pacific-10 Conference meet. Oregon placed fifth at Pac-10s, its highest finish since 1998. Stiegeler and Lorenzo won Pac-10 titles while Harris and junior Jason Boness earned runner-up honors.

That set up Oregon final performance of the season at home for the NCAAs. Stiegeler's win and Hartmann's third-place finish put the Ducks in the early lead for day one. Lorenzo's win and an eighth-place finish by junior Billy Pappas on day two kept Oregon in the lead, but without any placers for the final two days, the Ducks faded to ninth, still a respectable finish.

The future looks even brighter, as all of Oregon's NCAA point-earners return to repeat their performances.

## Emmies

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goal pass. Game over?

Arizona State tailback Mike Williams fumbled the ball to Oregon, with neither team able to stop the clock. Harrington connected with Peele in the end zone on the very next play. In overtime, the Sun Devils went for two after trading touchdowns with the Ducks in the second extra period. They missed the fake to tight end Todd Heap. Oregon won, 56-55.

**Best Coach:** Ohio State wanted Mike Bellotti, but he was so valuable to Oregon that the Ducks offered him a bundle of money to stay.

Or was it that Oregon was too valuable to Bellotti? The football coach has built the Ducks from nothing into something. He has made Autzen Stadium into the most feared football venue on the West Coast, and he has built the Ducks into a national title contender. It's time for coach Bellotti to get his due: An Emmie.

**Rookie of the Year:** While Oregon got fresh talent in nearly every sport this year, none was as anticipated as Luke Ridnour's. The point guard from Washington was a major recruiting coup for the men's hoops team, and Ridnour didn't disappoint. He

averaged 7.4 points and 3.8 assists per game in his freshman campaign.

But Ridnour's most awesome accomplishment was an award handed to him by the Pacific-10 Conference: Ridnour received Freshman of the Year honors for his performance this season. It was the first such award for an Oregon athlete.

**Most Valuable Female Athlete:** Our winner in this category received last year's "most entertaining" award for a reason. She lights up an otherwise dreary soccer game with her hustle, her breathtaking one-on-one moves and her resiliency. For all these reasons, Chalise Baysa is our 2000-01 Most Valuable Female Athlete.

Baysa will enter the Oregon record books for an entirely different reason. This season she became Oregon's all-time leading scorer with a pair of goals against Arizona, and with one more season left, she's only just starting to show what she's capable of.

**Most Valuable Male Athlete:** This crazy Argentinean could have won most entertaining. He could have gotten best interview. He could have won for best play, best game and biggest heart. But that would have been just up Santiago Lorenzo's alley; He's used to winning everything.

Lorenzo captured Eugene's hearts with a rousing, last-second victory in the NCAA Championships de-

catlon two weeks ago at Hayward Field. The win came on the heels of a Pac-10 Championship two weeks earlier in Berkeley, Calif.

Lorenzo couldn't have had a more dramatic finish. Heading into the 1,500-meter race, the final event of the decathlon, Lorenzo needed to beat Tennessee's Stephen Harris by two seconds to win the whole thing. He beat Harris by four seconds.

Congratulations, Santiago, on a great season. And finally...

**The Jody Runge Lifetime Achievement Award:** The name says it all. We're starting a new award this year, in honor of Jody Runge, who recently stepped down as women's basketball head coach. The award's first recipient is... Jody Runge! After years of winning constantly, Runge finally lost in the game of life. Her interactions with her players led them to essentially remove her from her post.

Let's just hope that next year's recipient isn't Bev Smith.

So, there you have it. The second annual Emmies were an unqualified success. The Emerald sports staff will continue to be committed to covering Oregon sports, week in and week out.

For those suckers staying in Eugene this summer, read us on Tuesdays. For the rest of you, we'll catch you in the fall.

And that's the ball game, folks.

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