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Oregon Daily Emerald

Women harriers a step behind

■ The women's cross country team looks to catch up to its Pac-10 foes, while the men performed well up in Portland

By Chris Cabot
Oregon Daily Emerald

Though a fifth place finish may not have been what head coach Tom Heinonen and the women of the cross country team were looking for in Seattle, it is a start.

Next weekend's Roy Griak Invitational in St. Paul, Minn., begins the portion of the season when they need to score well in order to have a chance at going to the NCAA Championships, and Saturday's Sundodger Invitational provided an excellent opportunity for the team to gain some valuable experience.

"I liked the way they raced, but we are far behind our Pac-10 opponents," Heinonen said.

The Washington Huskies led the way with 35 points and were followed by UCLA (53 points), Auburn (95) and Washington State (107). The Ducks finished with 121 points, which placed them ahead of non-conference opponents Boise State, Portland, Eastern Washington and Idaho.

Junior transfer Carrie Zografos ran extremely well for the Ducks, finishing seventh overall with a time of 17:36, 38 seconds behind second-place finisher Lisa Gibbs of Washington. Another Husky, Sabrina Munro, finished almost a full minute ahead of Gibbs for the win with a time of 16:06.

Zografos was in 14th place a mile into the race and then charged all the way up to seventh. Teammate Laura Harmon, who finished second for the Ducks and 19th overall,

was impressed with the way Zografos ran.

"She is just so strong right now," Harmon said. "She's probably going to be our lead runner this entire year."

Zografos was in Mexico studying abroad for a portion of the summer and ran at a high-altitude park there.

She also spent time in Boulder, Colo., where she was for the first two years of her collegiate career. The training she put in this summer

paid off, and she said she feels good about the way she is running.

"It was fun," she said. "I've never been first on a team before."

Harmon also is coming into the season enthusiastic about her own running thus far.

"I felt like I could have done a little better," she said. "But I'm running better than I've run at the beginning of any season right now."

Many of the teams in the Pacific-10 have been training longer than the Ducks. UCLA ran a race on Sept. 1, before Heinonen's squad had even started team workouts in Eugene.

"It remains to be seen whether we can close the gap on the teams that have players going to nationals," Heinonen said. "The first step is to beat Washington State and then close in on UCLA, and UCLA is miles ahead of us right now."

Other Oregon finishers included Erinn Gulbrandsen (33rd, 18:23), Magdalena Sandoval (35th, 18:28), Annette Mosey (44th, 18:39), Sara Schaaf (49th, 18:45), Alicia Snyder-Carlson (53rd, 19:02) and Annie Davis (69th, 19:40).

Tara Struyk, a top runner from last year who has been sidelined due to injury, has been training in the water, getting ready to run next weekend at the Roy Griak Invitational, a race that Heinonen has all but demanded her to be ready for because he thinks she can step right into a scoring role.

At the Roy Griak Invitational, whose namesake was Heinonen's coach when he was in school, the Ducks placed seventh last year. Many of the teams from the Pac-10 will be there along with various other top schools from around the country.

On the men's side, the Ducks head into next Saturday's invitational ranked 13th in the nation after sweeping the season opener up in Portland. The "B" unit garnered victories over Portland and Portland State on Wednesday, thanks in large part to top Oregon finishers Noel Paulson and John Lucas.

Paulson ran the 5,820-meter race in 18:27 to claim his first career victory. Three seconds later, fellow sophomore Lucas crossed the line ahead of Portland's Steve Schaefer, who finished with a time of 18:35.

Other finishers for the Ducks were Oliver Redig (fourth, 18:55), Adam Bergquist (sixth, 19:01), Kyle Robinson (seventh, 19:01), Simon Kimata (11th, 19:37) and Ross Krempel (12th, 19:59).

The harriers topped Portland's "B" unit 20-36 and beat Portland State 15-47.

In the preseason 2001 Mondo Men's Division 1 Coaches Poll, Portland was ranked 17th in the nation, so Wednesday's triangular was no walk in the park for head coach Martin Smith's runners.

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