

Women's cross country finishes low in desert

■ The Ducks finish in eighth place out of nine teams at the Pac-10 Championships

By Chris Cabot
Oregon Daily Emerald

When nine teams compete at a cross country meet, a eighth-place finish does not sound especially good.

But with the top five teams in the Pacific-10 Conference ranked in the top-25 in the country, the runners on the Oregon women's cross country team say they aren't

disappointed with their eighth-place showing at Saturday's Pac-10 Championships.

The Ducks finished with 210 points, a score that bettered only California's 259. According to plan, top-ranked Stanford (27 points) ran to the championship behind Lauren Fleshman and Sara Bei, who finished first and second individually. Eleventh-ranked Arizona finished second with 64 points and

was followed by No. 7 Arizona State, No. 22 UCLA, No. 13 Washington, Washington State and USC.

Going into the race in Scottsdale, Ariz., Oregon was hoping to achieve a sixth-place finish above Washington State, USC and Cal. After practicing in the cold rain of Eugene, the harriers may have been affected by the 90-degree temperatures of the desert.

"We raced pretty much to our potential for the day," said sophomore Magdalena Sandoval, who finished second for the Ducks.

Junior Carrie Zografos led Oregon and finished 35th overall with a time of 22:58.8 over the 6,000 meter course. Sandoval was two places behind Zografos with a time of 23:06.9 and was followed by Erinn Gulbrandsen (44th, 23:32.6), Annette Mosey (46th, 23:34.2), Laura Harmon (48th, 23:39.7), Sara Schaaf (56th, 25:05.1) and Alicia Snyder-Carlson (60th, 26:20.5).

"Our team is all middle-distance runners, and they didn't handle the heat or competition very well," head coach Tom Heinonen said.

"They got out reasonably at the start on a day that was getting hotter all the time, but weren't able to move up, except for Magdalena and Erinn."

Sophomore Laura Harmon, who has often finished near Zografos and Sandoval this season, still seems to be feeling the effects of a kidney infection she began to suffer the week before pre-nationals on Oct. 13th.

"I think she needs a little more time to get her strength back," Sandoval said.

Victory

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gravates on a 27-yard run at the end of the third quarter.

So Smith had the first quarter off and Morris had the fourth quarter off.

In all, the two combine for 423 yards. Add Joey Harrington's 23 yards rushing, and that's a tally of 446 yards running the football that smashes the Oregon school record of 403 yards set against California in 1960.

"I had an easy job today: Just hand the ball off and watch them run," Harrington said with a grin he must have been glad to be sporting again.

Then there was also the game itself. In typical Ducks fashion, Oregon took the 17-3 lead, then the 17-10 lead, then the 24-10 lead, then the 24-17 lead and then barely hung on for the 24-17 victory.

"We made it a little bit tougher on ourselves than we needed it to be," Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said.

But what would be the fun in not making every second count? And besides, Washington State was undefeated and stood 10th in the Bowl Championship Series rankings. So traveling up to the Hawaiian-like locale of Pullman, Wash., and ending up victorious makes a point.

"We made a statement today," Harrington said. "We had a point to prove."

But the statement almost never got the chance to go through.

Oregon, with its seven-point lead, punts the ball back to Washington State with 1:34 to play in the game.

The Cougars start at their 14-yard line and quarterback Jason Gesser promptly completes five out of seven passes to bring them all the way down to the Oregon eight-yard line with 13 seconds left.

"I was like, 'Here we go, we're going into overtime again,'" said Gesser, remembering Oregon's 27-24 overtime victory in Pullman last season.

On first and goal, Gesser spikes

the ball to the ground, stopping the clock.

On second and goal, Gesser lofts the ball in the corner of the end zone to 6-foot-6 Mike Bush, but 5-foot-8 Rashad Bauman leaps up and knocks it away.

"Yeah, that was kind of like last week with Teyo, but I wasn't thinking about it, I just batted it down," said Bauman, referring to the touchdown by Stanford's 6-foot-7 receiver Teyo Johnson over the outstretched hands of Bauman in the end zone on Oct. 20.

On third and goal, seven seconds left in the game, Gesser steps back, throws it down the middle, but right at Oregon linebacker David Moretti, who watches as it zips into his hands, and onto the ground.

"I have no excuse for not catching that ball," Moretti said. "I had that right in the bread basket. I could have made the game one play less."

Instead, the incomplete pass brings up the final play of the game.

On fourth and goal, two seconds on the clock, the undefeated

Cougars are down by seven and are eight yards away from extending the game into an extra session.

Gesser takes the snap and again looks for Bush in the corner. The ball reaches Bush's hands, but Mallard's sculpted 6-foot-2, 215-pound frame reaches Bush at the same time. The ball bounces off Bush's hands and flutters to the turf to complete Oregon's key win, a week after the Stanford loss.

"I'm not sure how he ended up on the receiver on that last play, but I'm glad he did," Bellotti said of Mallard.

With the clock finally reading 0:00, the Ducks run over to the pack of Oregon fans in the end zone. Stephen Clayton, the energetic red-shirt freshman who has been impressive on special teams all season, is waving to the crowd just as he was at the beginning of this wild afternoon when he was the first Duck out of the tunnel.

Soon, the Ducks would enter the boisterous atmosphere of their locker room. And soon, the Ducks would join together and sing a rous-

ing rendition of the Oregon fight song that is customary after every win.

But you could hear in their loud, proud and a tad off-key singing voices at that time, just how much this win meant to them.

With the Bruins and Cougars losing Saturday, no team in the Pacific-10 Conference is undefeated. Five teams have only one loss.

And Oregon remained one of them.

This was not your average win for these Ducks. It was a win that reclaimed some of that important swagger that had been taken from them. It was a win that proved their belief that one loss does not end a season.

And it was one win that sent one loud message back across the rest of this unpredictable, yet so enjoyable, Pac-10 Conference.

Bauman summed up the importance of the win in two words: "We're baaaaaack."

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