

Questions from a reporter's cold Olympic couch

Maybe I'm stressed out from midterms. Maybe I've got tonsillitis. Maybe I'm coming down with pneumonia.

Because I've been watching these Winter Olympics, and there's just certain things I can't figure out. I'm confused. Mixed up in the head. Slowed down by this Olympic cold.

Please, I'm crying out for help here. Does anybody know why they announce the medal winners in French before English? Did they move the Olympics to Montreal in the middle of the night without notifying anybody? Did France win the second-most-fans-in-Salt-Lake-so-they-announce-all-the-medals-in-French award?

On a separate note, did old guys really need to talk "snowboard speak" to the American boarders who swept the half-pipe on Monday? It's really sort of embarrassing. Did the Oregonian need to run the headline "Bionic, dude! A U.S. sweep"?

One SportsCenter reporter, who tried desperately to sprinkle a few mentions of "sick

and "gnarly" throughout his interview with the trio Monday night, actually ended the interview by saying: "You guys were awesome. Is that a cool word to use?"



Peter Hockaday
Two minutes for crosschecking

The snowboarders responded by smiling bleakly, too dumbfounded to speak. These guys are Olympians, too. They understand that Olympic medals mean slightly more than X-Games medals, so cut them some slack ... dude.

Moving on, how cool are Canadians? If I wasn't an American, I'd be a Canadian. I'm now officially rooting for Canada. Why? Because they're just good people. Those two figure

skaters, Jamie Sale and David Pelletier, got absolutely cheated out of a gold medal. They were robbed, blindsided with an

Eastern right hook that came from the general direction of the former USSR, and had their gold medals replaced with silver ones.

Their reaction? A shrug, a few tears, lots of hugs. A big ol' high-five for the Russian winners.

Canadians. Keeping with the figure-skating theme, I can't wait until the women's singles get under way. Before you call me a pansy, check out the tape of Bob Costas interviewing American teammates Michelle Kwan, Sarah Hughes and Sasha Cohen the other night. These three girls, all Americans, hate each other — with a capital H. Don't be surprised if metal tire irons are brought out on the night of the competition. Can you say Tonya Harding?

And furthering my sickness, what's all the hulabaloo about Picabo? She's the most decorated skier in American history? Ummm, she won a gold and a silver. We Americans need some more decoration. She's had a million and a half knee surgeries, and we ex-

pected her to win gold? We have expectations that are too high for overrated athletes.

Is there any name cooler than Johnny Moseley's "dinner roll" trick?

Is there any sport cooler than curling? Well, maybe a few.

Like, for instance, the biathlon. Have you ever tried cross country skiing, then shooting a rifle at a target 50 meters away ASAP? Yeah. It's tough. Real tough. Let me tell you.

And, on a final note, does anybody know why an international event can stir up so much national pride? Seeing the World Trade Center flag carried in, a team — the "Miracle on Ice" U.S. hockey team from 1980 — lighting the Olympic flame, each American medal more important than the last, it just ignites this small flame of its own in the gut of most Americans at a time when those fires need desperately to be lit.

Who's ready for the hockey to start?

E-mail sports reporter Peter Hockaday at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com.

Men's

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that stresses his points.

"The next three home games are crucial in order for the Ducks to win the Pac-10 championship and to advance to the NCAA Tournament," Kent said in the e-mail. "We're counting on the Pit Crew to be loud and dominant, but at the same time let's be respectful of our visitors. As we continue our great reputation at Mac Court, let's be sure to use 'appropriate' chants and remember to show respect to our visitors."

Oregon has three home games left, against Oregon State on Satur-

day and the Washington schools the following weekend.

Chatting for 'nour

Those who don't run into Oregon point guard Luke Ridnour on campus today can go online to ask him all those burning questions.

Ridnour will be fielding electronic questions from fans on ESPN.com, starting at 2:15 p.m. Fans can also submit questions before 2:15 if they want, and they could be answered during the chat time.

Accoladin'

The first honor has rolled in for the Ducks, and it could be simply the start of the awards season.

Ridnour and senior guard Freddie Jones were named to the National Association of Basketball Coaches 2002 all-district team, while forward Luke Jackson was named to the all-district second team. Jones and Ridnour joined Gonzaga's Dan Dickau, Stanford's Casey Jacobsen and fellow Cardinal Curtis Borchart on the District 14 first team. The second team includes Zach Gourde from Gonzaga, Phillip Ricci from Oregon State and Utah State standouts Tony Brown and Desmond Peniger.

"This whole team has been in harmony, which has allowed those guys to do the job that they're capable of doing," Kent said, referring to

Jones, Ridnour and Jackson. The award is "a compliment to the whole team."

It doesn't get worse

With the top of the Pac-10 more crowded than a New York subway train, the Ducks are lucky to play their next three games at home against the bottom of the conference, even if the bottom is as packed as the top.

Oregon State, Washington and Washington State hold a combined 6-33 conference record. On the road, the terrific trio is 2-17. Both road wins belong to the Beavers, who beat, coincidentally, Washington and Washington State in the Evergreen state.

Offending

Just how good is Oregon's offense this season?

Really good.

Not only do the Ducks lead the conference in scoring per game (86.3 points per contest), but they're also tops — by a lot — in margin of victory (15 points per game, compared with Stanford's 11.7) and field goal percentage (.489 compared with UCLA's .480).

The Ducks also lead the Pac-10 in three-point percentage, field-goal percentage and three-pointers per game.

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Women's

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that forced her to sit out last season — Williams has racked up 411 points, with 271 coming in Pacific-10 Conference play. At 1,275 career points, she needs 30 more to move into ninth place in Oregon history, passing Angelina Wolvert.

Perhaps Williams' greatest feat this season is her ability to knock down her free throws with precision.

"I really don't ever practice free throws," she said. "I think it's just more of a mental thing, being confident when I shoot."

In 85 attempts this season from the charity stripe, Williams has made 75.

She leads the Pac-10 with an 88 percent free-throw average and is looking to etch her name in Ducks' history with the highest percentage in a season in school history. In the 1994-95 season, Sally Crowe made 86 percent of her free throws.

"It's weird. When I was younger, I used to practice free throws all the time, and I was only about a 75, 80 percent shooter," Williams said.

Williams is already the school's all-time leader, shooting 84 percent for her career.

Dodgin' a bullet

Unlike past seasons, the Ducks have been blessed with good health this year.

Only three players — Edniesha

Curry, Amy Parrish and Kourtney Shreve — have missed time due to an injury or sickness this season, and all were for only a short period of time.

"I think that it helps you in practice," head coach Bev Smith said. "You're able to get people the amount of repetition (they need). Being this is a new team and a new system, that counts big time."

Curry, the most seriously injured of the three, was a late scratch from the starting lineup at USC in December because of an injured foot. She entered the game late, but the Ducks were unable to overtake the Trojans, losing 83-73.

She sat out the next three games against Washington, Washington State and Arizona, seeing the Ducks go 3-0.

Parrish and Shreve have each missed one game. Shreve sat out Feb. 2 against Arizona, a game the Ducks lost 84-68.

"In a game like that where we didn't have anything firing, she could have been important," Smith said.

In an 18-game conference season, and with an additional 10 out of conference, injuries are a normal part of the game. However, the Ducks have survived the common sprains and pulls that can hinder athletes during games.

"We have to give credit to Geoff Ginther, our strength and conditioning coach," Smith said. "We haven't had a lot of those wear and tear injuries, and it seems like we're doing something right in that area of prepar-

ing our athletes physically so they can come back the whole season."

The "K" factor

She's 6-foot-3, and averages 8.9 points per game. She grabs 7.8 boards per game and has increased that total to 9.7 in Pac-10 play.

But Cathrine Kraayeveld does not care about her statistics.

"I don't really pay much attention to it, but I just know that my team needs it right now," she said.

In her last nine games, she has collected 107 rebounds, good for 11.7 per game. In addition, her 9.7 boards per game in conference play places her third in the Pac-10.

E-mail sports reporter Hank Hager at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.

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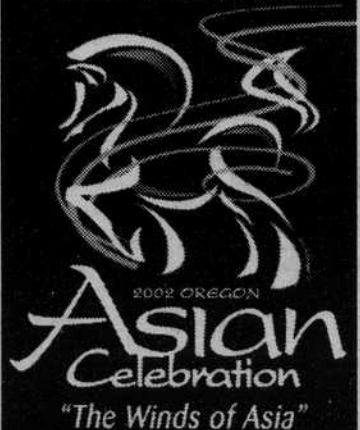
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