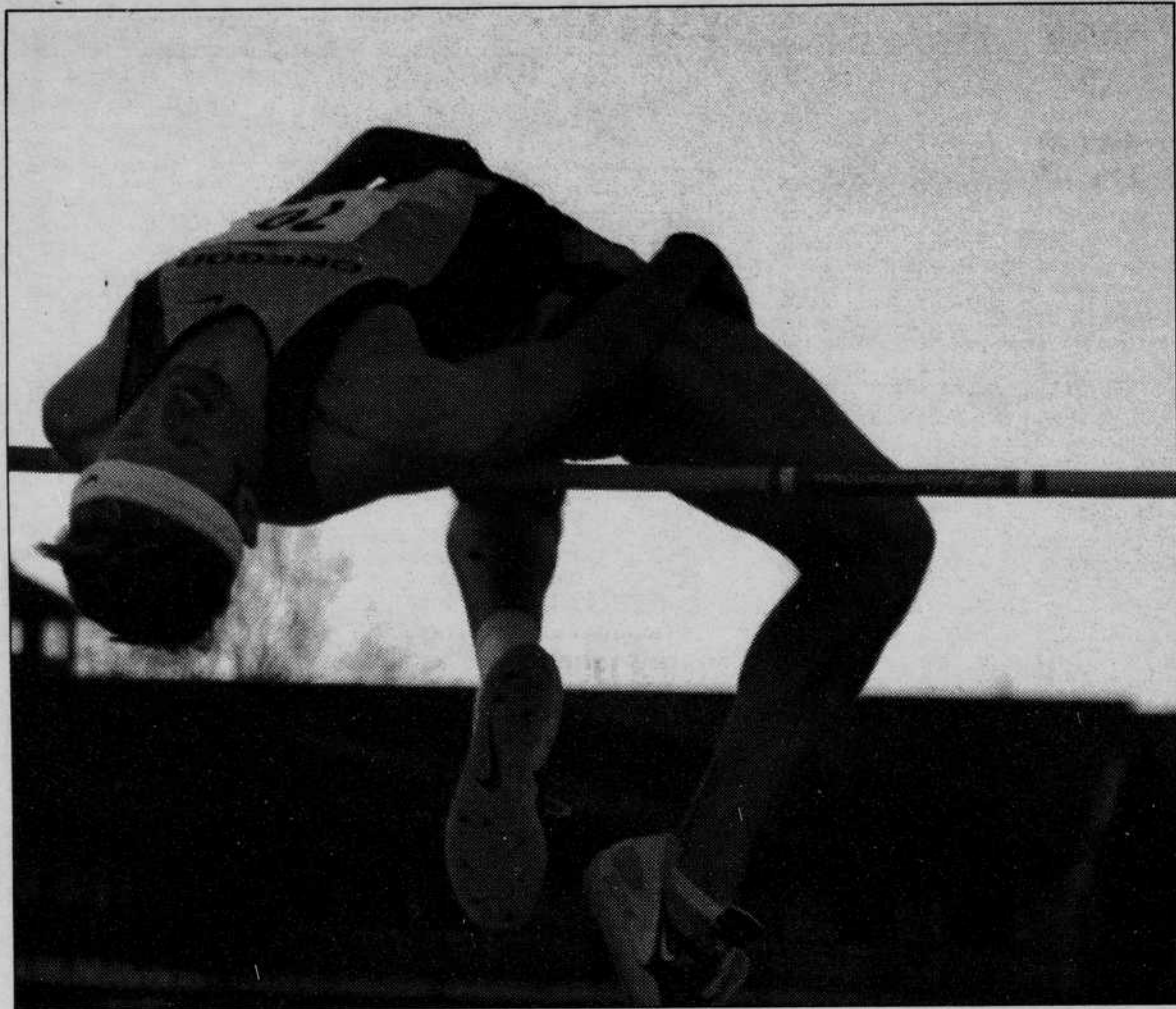




Adam Jones Emerald

Jason Hartmann is one of a handful of Ducks favored to win their events this weekend. Hartmann is ranked fourth in the 10,000.

Men's

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State and Southern California are perennially in the hunt for the conference crown.

"We're going to need all 24 athletes to step up," Oregon head coach Martin Smith said.

But Smith also said that the individual aspect of the conference championships could inherently help in the team race.

"I don't think in terms of winning or losing the meet," Smith said. "I just focus on preparing the athletes and putting every athlete in the best possible position to win."

The Ducks will rely heavily on its handful of stars to score points at the conference meet. Kimata, who leads the conference in the 800, will join with Micah Harris (110 hurdles), Brandon Holliday (400 hurdles), Jason Hartmann (10,000), Adam Kriz (hammer) and Trevor Woods (pole vault) as favorites or at least strong contenders to win

their events.

That leaves athletes like Samie Parker in the 100, Jason Boness and Kyle Johnson in the high jump and Foluso Akinradewo in the triple

"I don't think in terms of winning or losing the meet. I just focus on preparing the athletes and putting every athlete in the best possible position to win."

Martin Smith
Oregon head coach

jump, athletes that are on the verge of breaking out for big performances. Boness is a former Pac-10 champion and school record-holder, but has been plagued by injuries this year. Parker, a football player, has been steadily improving his time in the 100 since joining the track

squad full-time.

For some of those fringe athletes, the Pac-10s are likely their last meet of the season. While strong fields can lead to NCAA qualifying marks, the tactical nature of the meet can force those marks down.

"It can act as another meet to qualify for NC's," Smith said. "But we're not thinking about the NCAA's this weekend."

"I know for sure that time doesn't matter in Pac-10s, it's more tactical," Kimata said.

So while it will be tough for the athletes to score for the postseason, they can still score for their team. Which will paramount this weekend if the Ducks are to complete the "year of the Duck."

"It's going to take everybody," Harris said. "Everybody's got to be at their best. Every one of us has to rise on that day to win. Everyone."

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

Women's

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But that doesn't mean the Ducks won't stand a chance, at least in individual events.

Junior Amanda Brown, the last Oregon athlete to qualify for the championship when she won the Oregon Twilight on May 11 in the long jump, will start off the day for the Ducks and participates in the first event on Saturday.

"I'm just happy I'm going," she said. "I didn't really think I would be going, but I just pulled it through."

Following Brown in the field events, Oregon's javelin, pole vault and discus entrants will get a chance to show off their ability.

If there is a group that could bolt the Ducks to the top, the Oregon javelin foursome would be it. Sophomore Sarah Malone, last season's second-place finisher, has already targeted USC's Inga Strasiulionyte as the woman to beat.

"If I can beat her at Pac-10s, then maybe I can psyche her out a little bit for nationals," Malone said. "A conference championship would be awesome. I missed out on it last year."

But don't count out Oregon's pole vaulting squad. Sophomore Kirsten Riley and junior Becky Holliday enter the championships ranked in the top 10 in the conference, with Holliday as high as fourth.

Closing out the top competitors in the field, Sauvage, junior Mary Etter and freshman Katie McKeever will round out Oregon's field events. Etter will compete in both the shot put and discus, with Sauvage in the hammer and McKeever in the discus.

"I'm looking forward to Pac-10s," Etter said. "It's going to be a fun meet. The discus is like top in the nation in the Pac-10 so I'm excited."

Then come the Duck runners. An unheralded group, they could surprise some people in Pullman.

Junior Eri Macdonald, one of Oregon's top runners this season, enters the Pac-10s with the nation's 17th-best mark in the 800. When adjusted against conference opponents, she drops down to sixth.

Senior Jenny Kenyon returns to Pullman after finishing fifth in the heptathlon last week, and will compete in the 100 hurdles. Freshman Laura Harmon and junior Janette Davis will compete in the 1500 and 400, respectively, while senior Carrie Zografos takes her school record in the steeplechase to the championships.

Overall, the Ducks are hungry for a top finish at the final team meet of the season. Pullman, which will also help host the University of Idaho's graduation — less than 10 miles away — will be a busy place. But the Ducks are ready and willing to focus on the task at hand.

"Pullman is a small town, but it will be hectic there," Heinonen said. "It's going to be really busy for a town of Pullman's size, but we're ready for that."

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

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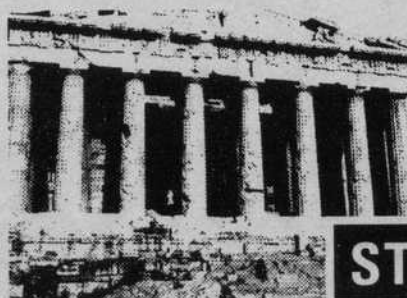
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