

Track

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the two Oregon athletes were left out by a hair shorter than what adorns the top of their heads. For McKeever, it was a disappointment in a career that has just started. For Riley, it leaves two more years to clear 13-feet in the vault and make her name known to the rest of the country.

"I think I let the pressure get to me a little bit this year," Riley said. "When I was a freshman, nobody expected anything out of me. Everyone was just like 'let's give her a chance.' This year, people were like 'perform.'"

Riley performed, placing sixth in the Pacific-10 Championships in Pullman, Wash., a meet that would help her jump almost 30 spots from No. 54. But her final height of 12 feet, 10 inches was just not good enough to get her over that last hurdle.

For McKeever, it was quite a different story. Named Female Track Athlete of the Year by The Sacramento Bee her senior year at Woodland High, McKeever's biggest enemy her first season in Oregon was not the expectations placed upon her, or the overall quality of competition. Like many athletes from California, McKeever had to adjust to the Eugene lifestyle, and more importantly, its weather.

"I've had an incredibly tough time adjusting," she said. "In fact, I'm still not completely adjusted. I hated the weather when we first started this season. So that was a big shock."

"Being away from home has also been tough. It's been pretty tough for me and hopefully next year will go a lot smoother for me."

"I've never worked as hard at anything in my life, and it's paid off."

Katie McKeever
freshman

Next year, the two will be older, most likely wiser, and better adjusted to the collegiate scene. While Riley believed she could have done much more, she is confident that clearing 13 feet is in her future.

Making matters even more in her favor, she will be matched with seniors-to-be Becky Holliday and Niki Reed. The two are well-known in track and field circles, and Riley will be attempting to make a name for herself as well.

"I've got Becky and Niki ahead of me and those are the two that I can look up to, but I've also got people behind me who I try to be a mentor to," she said. "I can't wait."

McKeever will have the same type of competition with current

teammates Mary Etter and Jordan Sauvage in the discus as well as hammer. However, McKeever will be closely related to javelin throwers Roslyn Lundeen and Elisa Crumley as keys to the overall success of the Oregon program.

The three headlined a strong freshman class in 2002, with only thoughts of getting better.

"It's cool to be able to have gone to Pac-10s and have almost gone to nationals," McKeever said. "It is exciting to think we could become the big three."

Together, though, McKeever and Riley are the heart and soul of Oregon track and field for at least the next two seasons. Both were highly ranked in national circles at the end of the season, but both have seen disappointment.

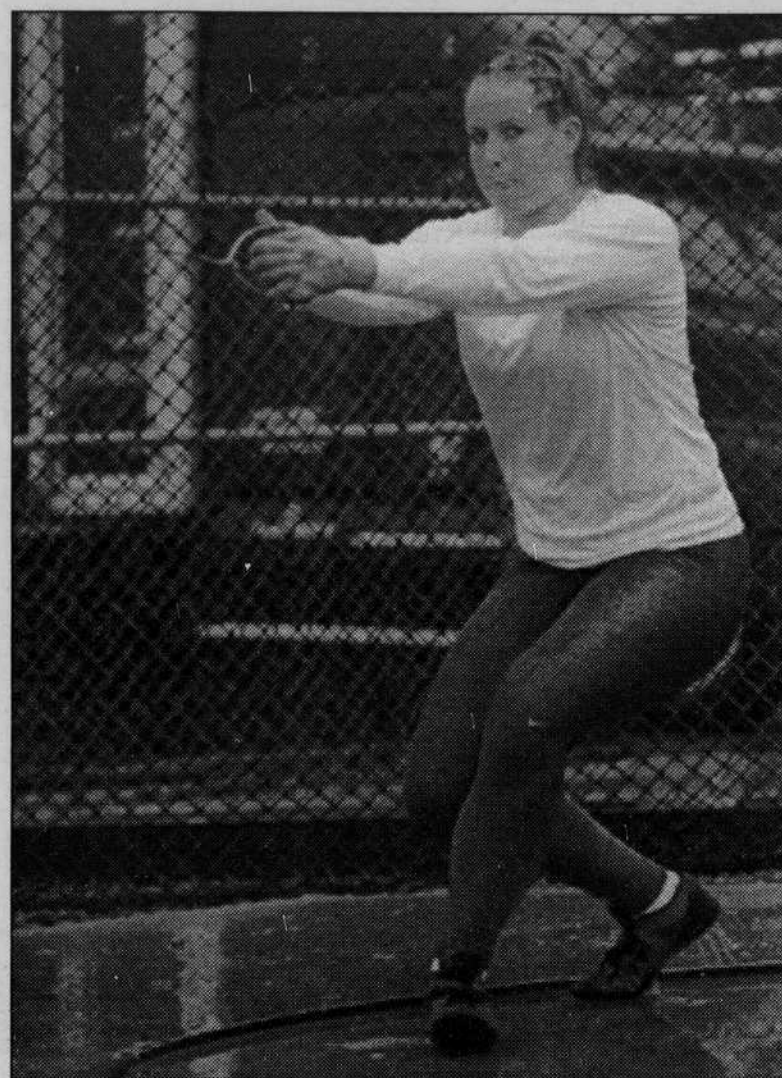
"I really want to make NCAAAs next season," McKeever said. "Being so close and not making it this season will keep me going next season."

Riley couldn't agree more. "I think I've worked really hard," she said. "I've never worked as hard at anything in my life, and it's paid off. It's not always everything you want but you have to take it in stride and realize that everything happens for a reason."

"I'd rather be so close than so far," she added. "It's good to move up and it's tough not to get that last bar. It's hard but I have to use that frustration for next year."

"Pure motivation."

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at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.



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Kirsten Riley will be one of Oregon's 'big three' in the pole vault next season, which also includes seniors-to-be Becky Holliday and Niki Reed.

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<http://csws.uoregon.edu/home/jobs.shtml>.

Send a brief C.V., including 3 contact references, and letter of application outlining relevant experience and including any sample URLs to Judith Musick, Assoc. Director, Center for the Study of Women in Society, 1201 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97405 or deliver same to CSWS.

Deadline: Friday, June 7th, 5:00 p.m. Direct questions to 346-5775 or e-mail QUESTIONS ONLY to dgilfil@darkwing.uoregon.edu. Applications will NOT be accepted by email.

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