



Thursday, June 6, 2002

Counting down the days until Omaha

Take me out to the ballgame...
Er, wait a minute. I'm in Oregon.
Must've forgot.
Guess I'll have to stick to the television to catch my daily highlights from the diamond.

Oops, forgot again. I don't have cable.
Well, in a few weeks I will, and you

can bet the television will be stuck on ESPN and ESPN2. And no, not because I'll be watching highlights of the NBA Finals, golf, or even (gasp!) the World Cup.

Nope. Instead, the sound of metal will fill my apartment. Metal from the great state of Nebraska.

Nebraska?
Yeah, Nebraska.

Omaha to be more exact. Omaha on June 14, amid 25,000 spectators at Rosenblatt Stadium, while eight of the nation's best duke it out in baseball heaven.

It's college baseball time, baby!

Well-known schools such as Florida State, Miami, Stanford, and USC all have good chances of playing for a shot at an NCAA title. Two of those schools — Florida State and Miami — I despise, but who cares?

While the big boys are complaining about contracts, saying that \$5 million a year isn't enough, it's refreshing to see the future stars of the game all at once. Roger Clemens once made it to Omaha. So did Mark McGwire, Lance Berkman and new phenom Mark Prior.

Take me out to the crowd...

There's no tobacco, no alcohol, no steroids. Nothing but baseball in its purest, most simple form.

Better yet, the baseball groupies are still in college, and save for a few exceptions, aren't middle-aged men spitting sunflower seeds into cups while sitting in front of the television watching eight hours of games because they feel obligated to after shelling out \$150 for the season.

Whew!

Buy me some peanuts and cracker jacks...

The "established" players in the majors are crying about contracts, the owners want to lock them out, and the sport just can't seem to right itself out.

But the NCAA, for all its shortcomings (you all haven't forgotten the BCS, have you?), has got something good going with the College World Series.

It seems every season more and more people show up to baseball heaven, packing old Rosenblatt to the brim, and showing the rest of the world that baseball isn't dead. These people appreciate the simplicity of the game at the college level.

They know that players like Clemson's Khalil Greene (possibly a future Eugene Emerald) will be leaving the college ranks soon for the big lights of

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Behind the Dish

Men hope to restore track dominance

■ A second-place finish at the Pac-10 meet gives the Ducks hope for a resurgence in the track and field program

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

This Oregon men's track and field team was a giant once. That giant went to sleep for a while.

But the alarm clock is ringing now.

In the past two seasons, the Ducks have proved their individual talent by placing ninth at the NCAA Championships in 2001, then proved their team togetherness by finishing second at this season's Pacific-10 Conference Championships.

Put those two together, head coach Martin Smith said, and you've got a recipe for track and field dominance.

"I certainly think we have the excitement about taking another step forward, not only at the conference level," Smith said. "With our performance of two years ago at the nationals, (we're excited about) a high competitive level at the national meet."

The awakening began at that national meet in 2001, where the Ducks got national championships from John Stiegeler in the javelin and Santiago Lorenzo in the decathlon. Fueled by the 20 points from those two athletes, Oregon shocked the field and finished in the top 10.

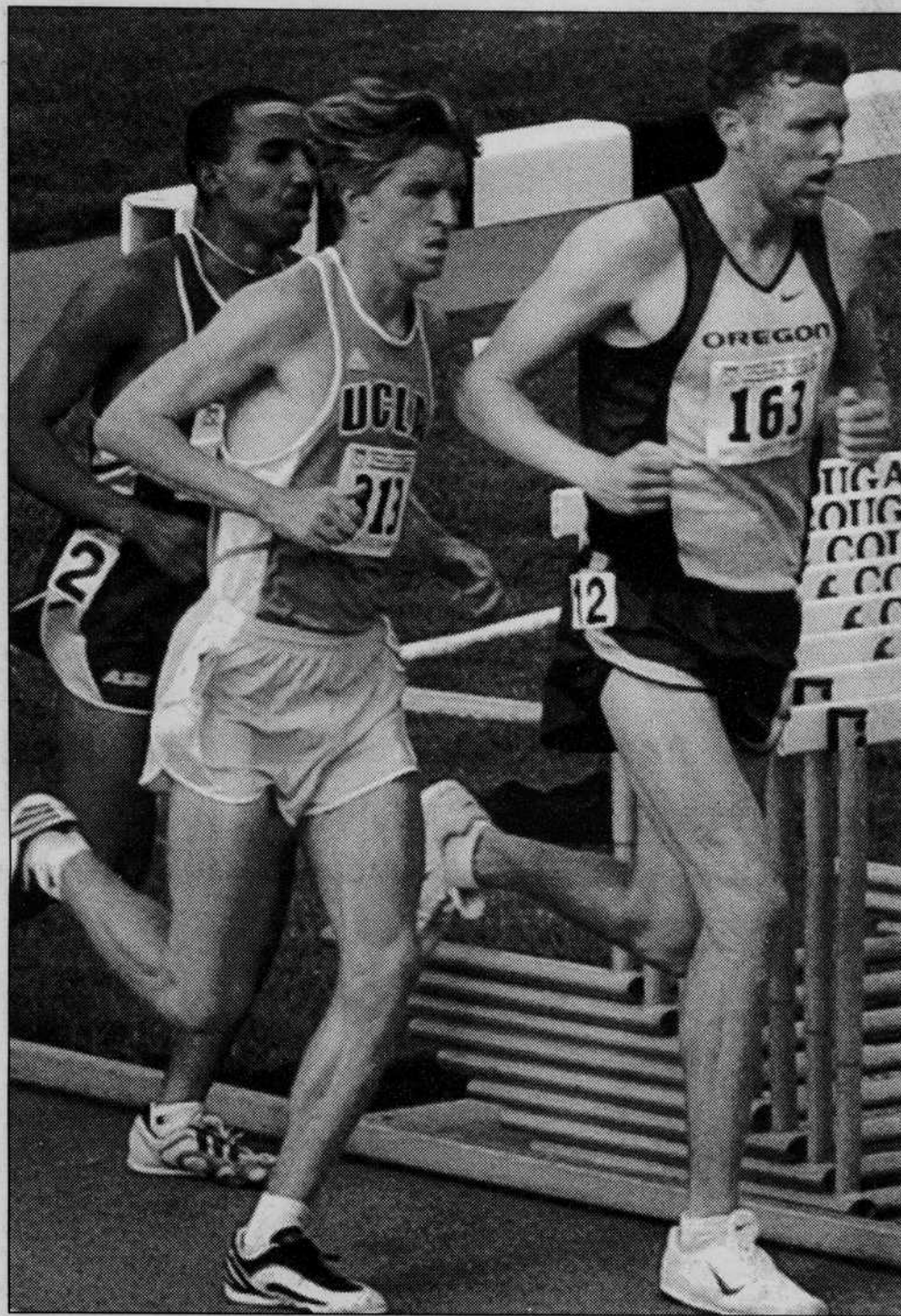
This season, Stiegeler and Lorenzo both went down with injuries, the former with a torn anterior cruciate ligament in April and the latter with a quadricep injury in the winter. Forced with the prospect of a postseason without the team's key athletes, the rest of the Ducks banded together with a Pac-10 title as their rallying cry.

"Basketball has done it, football has done it," senior runner Simon Kimata said of a Pac-10 championship back in April. "I'm not talking about individual, I'm talking about the team. It would make a lot of sense if we got it."

The words of the athletes resounded through the year. The athletes talked of building toward Pac-10s, not NCAAAs. They spoke of stepping up in Pullman, Wash., the site of the conference meet. They spoke of competing up to and beyond their potential.

Then, in mid-May, they went to Pullman and did all those things. The Ducks fell 26 points short of the Pac-10 title, but their second-place finish was progress enough from their fifth-place finish the season before. At the meet, the Ducks won five individual Pac-10 titles, and only one came from an athlete who was ranked first in his event heading in.

"I thought (the Pac-10 meet) was an extremely rewarding and very satisfying performance by our young men," Smith said. "I was very proud of them and very happy for them."



Courtesy Washington State Media Services

Junior-to-be Jason Hartmann (163) is one of the many talented Oregon athletes returning next season. Hartmann finished second in the 10,000 at the Pac-10 Championships and fourth at the NCAA Championships.

The NCAAAs turned out to be a different story. Only Jason Hartmann, fourth in the 10,000-meter race, and Micah Harris, seventh in the 110 hurdles, scored points in Baton Rouge, La. The Ducks dropped 26 spots from the previous year to finish 35th overall.

But Smith is hoping that next year will bring success in the conference and national meets.

"Obviously we're going to put John (Stiegeler) back into the equation in the javelin and

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Women's tennis coach announces resignation

■ After six years in Oregon, Ducks head coach Jack Griffin says he wants to be closer to his family in Seattle

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

Despite leading the Oregon women's tennis team to the second round of the NCAA Tournament last month, Jack Griffin announced his resignation, effective June 30, as head coach.

A national search has begun for his successor.

Griffin said he wants to move closer to wife, Amy Allmann, an assistant soccer coach at Washington, and son, Nicholas, who will celebrate his first birthday in September.

"This was a really difficult decision for



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myself and my family," Griffin said in a statement released Wednesday. "I was very fortunate to work for one of the best athletic departments in the country. I've also been blessed to work with some amazing players, assistant coaches and support staff, which made my time here very rewarding."

In six years at Oregon, Griffin, 36, compiled a 49-84 record and four NCAA Tournament appearances. He led the Ducks to a 14-11 record this year, capped off by a second-round berth in the NCAA Tournament and a season-ending No. 33 ranking. The Ducks upset No.

18 UNLV in the first round before falling to USC in the second round.

"The Oregon women's tennis program is now emerging as one of the stronger teams in the nation," Griffin said. "I will always take pride in knowing I've played a role in helping guide the program to this level."

From 1995-96, Griffin was an assistant at New Mexico, his alma mater. As a player from 1984-87, he became the first and only four-time All-Western Athletic Conference selection. The La Jolla, Calif., native graduated from New Mexico with a degree in sports administration.

Griffin was the seventh coach in the program's 29 years.

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