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SPORTS

Best bet
NHL: Detroit at San Jose
7:30 p.m., ESPN2

Thursday, October 10, 2002

Portland Marathon tests perseverance

I woke at 3:52 a.m., 20 minutes before I had set my alarm, on Sunday morning. My day of destiny had begun.

I poured my cup of coffee and toasted a whole wheat bagel. I added some strawberry jam to it and when I finished, I grabbed the red apple I had set aside the night before.

Then again, how was I really eating? I didn't even feel hungry; my stomach was in my throat.

After I cleaned up, I put my uniform on, pinned on my bib number, laced up my running shoes, grabbed my PowerBars and was off.

I jammed out to my "Rocky" soundtrack to get me pumped up on my drive to Portland. It's a pre-race ritual for me. It was 5:45 a.m. and still dark outside.

The sun wouldn't show its face until moments before 7 a.m. when I was at the start line. I listened to Mayor Vera Katz as she spoke of something; I really didn't pay attention. I couldn't think of anything except what would happen next.

Then we all took a moment to cheer on 90-year-old John Besson Jr. in his quest to set the world record for a man his age. And he would go on to destroy the record by more than an hour.

I stood among 8,000 others as we counted down from 10 to the start of our race. I was heading into the 26.2-mile monster known as the Portland Marathon.

I anticipated that I could average a seven-minute mile pace all the way. Well sure, I could hold that pace for maybe 10 or 12 miles, but if I did that I would never make it.

Through five miles it was amazing, from seeing my mother at certain spots on the course taking pictures to hearing all the spectators cheering and chatting with other runners.

I felt so slow. Yet I was faster than the pace I had wanted to run. I was excited, and adrenaline was running through my entire body.

Front Avenue can seem very long and straight when you run the next six and a half miles on it. The farther you go, the more the cheering dies down, and you hear nothing but your heartbeat.

I did not begin to feel my feet or my legs until around mile eight. Then I realized I was human and not Superman. It was my first marathon, and it would be a battle to the finish.

I found my stride by that point, and I got really comfortable at a 7:25 second-mile pace. I began to see a lot of the same people around me, which was good.

The fun and games would soon end, and I would have to push myself to reach my goal.

Around mile 13 you separate the men from the boys. It's a four mile gradual climb all the way to the St. Johns Bridge. I dropped to a 7:46 pace — my slowest mile yet, and unacceptable. My next mile was 7:28, a much better time.

Through the climb, I was passed only one time. I had only trained to the distance of 16 miles, so once I passed that point it was all new to me.

It was still a matter of focus. Cresting the bridge is great, but there are still another eight miles to go to the finish.

For all the runners out there, the saying 'hit the wall' is very familiar. And to all the rest who don't understand, it is when hell comes knocking at your door. The body shuts down and doesn't want to give anymore.

I hit the wall. I didn't even see it coming. I just hit it, and I hit it hard. I slowed down, and for the first time I questioned whether I would make it to the finish.

No longer was I taking my race mile by mile, but step by step. I smiled for the race photo that they take at mile 22, amazed that I had made it that far.

Then after the 23rd mile an older gentleman ran up next to me and said, "There is ice cream at the finish."

I'm not even that big a fan of ice cream but he recognized my pain, and right then I no longer felt alone.

The Rose Garden was in my sights soon enough, and then I could begin to hear the faint cheers and screams of the finish line.

Then the bridge of destiny. I knew if I made it to the Steel Bridge I could last one more mile. That's when I 'put the hammer down.' In non-runner terms, I went as fast as feasibly possible in my condition.

Now I audibly heard the screams. I saw all the spectators cheering and screaming. My soul had taken me through the longest eight miles of my life after my legs gave way.

The finish line. I told my father, who ran the marathon in 1994, before the race started that "I'm going to hell, and I'll be back in about three and a half hours."

I crossed in 3:22:34.

I was happy. My friends and family threw their arms around me and said how proud they were. I walked across the street to get my finisher's shirt. I made it. I survived. The end.



Jesse Thomas
Go the distance

UO churns out coaches

UCLA's Bob Toledo is one of many former Oregon assistants who is now the head coach at another Pac-10 school

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

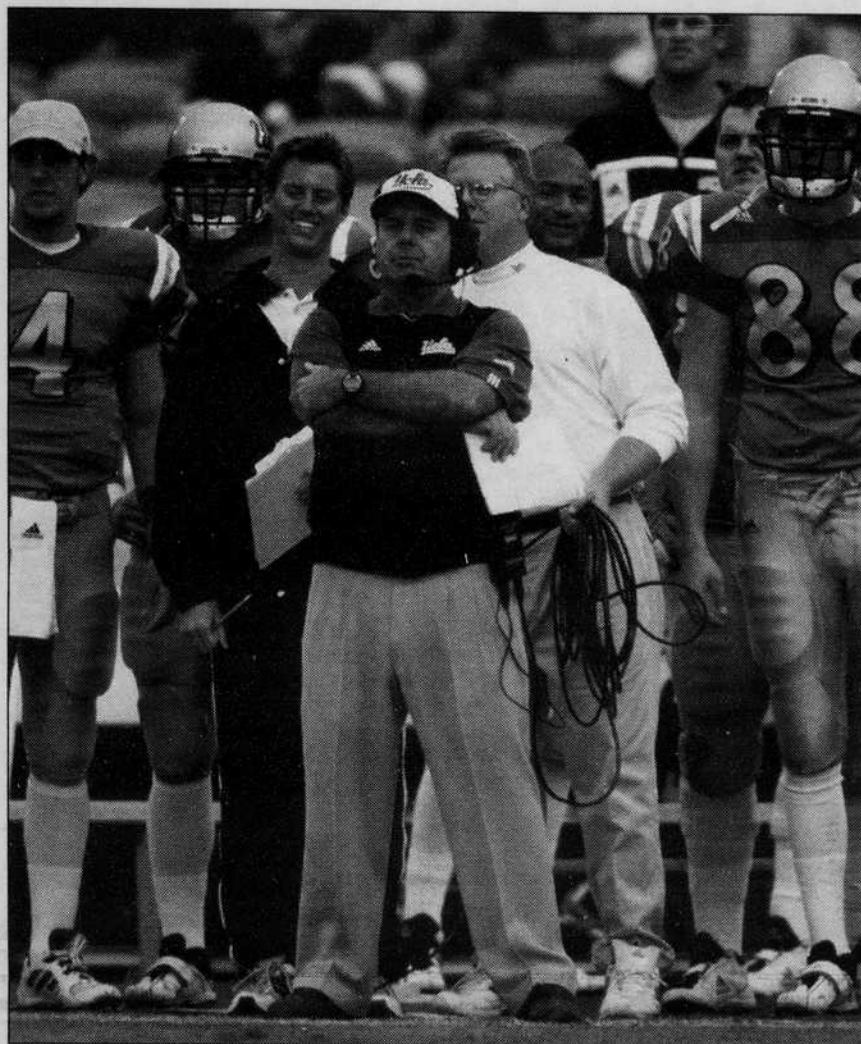
When UCLA head coach Bob Toledo started as offensive coordinator at Oregon in 1983, he had no idea what he was standing on.

A stepping stone. That's what Oregon has become for many coaches in the Pacific-10 Conference. Four current conference coaches started as assistant coaches at Oregon including Toledo, Ducks head coach Mike Bellotti, California head coach Jeff Tedford and Arizona State head coach Dirk Koetter.

"It's kind of the cradle of coaches on the West Coast," Toledo said. "It was a stepping stone, and it still is because a lot of people have had success going there and then moving on."

Toledo is the most established of the ex-Oregon assistants, aside from Bellotti. During his time as offensive coordinator for the Ducks, Toledo coached the likes of Bill Musgrave, Chris Miller and Derek Loville. His tutelage of those players helped him land a job at Texas A&M, where he coached the school's most prolific offense ever and was with an Aggie team that went to three-straight Cotton

Turn to **Coaches**, page 14



Courtesy UCLA Media Services

Bob Toledo (center) spent five years as an assistant coach at Oregon before moving to UCLA.

Ducks advance despite sickness

Three Oregon men's tennis players go winless, but advance to the main draw of the Icy Hot tournament

Tennis

Jon Roetman
Freelance Sports Reporter

Every now and then, we all need a little luck — especially while battling stomach sickness.

Despite going winless and having to fight through upset stomachs, three Oregon men's tennis players advanced to the main draw at the Icy Hot/ITA All-American Championships, beginning today in Chattanooga, Tenn. Preseason No. 63-ranked freshman Manuel Kost will play in the singles draw, while freshman Sven Swinnen and junior Oded Teig will compete in the doubles draw.

Oregon head coach Chris Russell said the stomach problems were a result of something the players ate Tuesday evening.

Kost forged on, winning the first set of his qualifying match in a tiebreaker, but couldn't hold on as he eventually fell to Baylor's Ivor Lovrak 6-7, 6-2, 6-2. Swinnen and Teig struggled with their illness, losing their qualifying doubles match against Butler's Brandon and Kevin Gill 8-4.

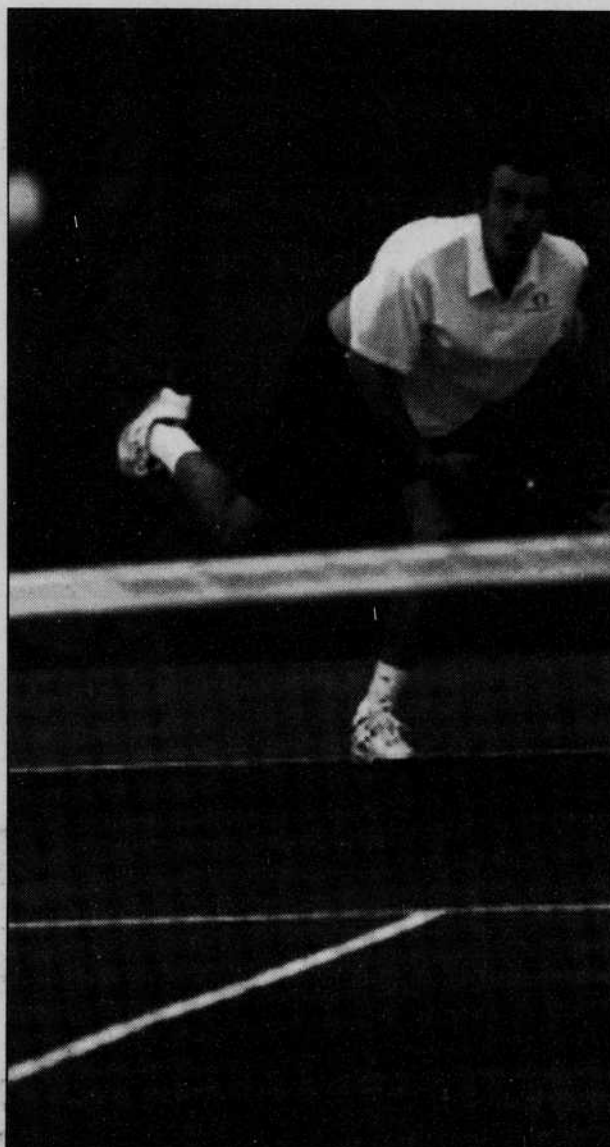
Russell was informed by a tournament referee Wednesday that the Ducks had qualified for the main draw by virtue of the "lucky loser" entry.

"It was an interesting day for us," Russell said. "They should feel a little better tomorrow."

Kost will face off with preseason No. 92 Oliver Levant of Florida in today's first round. Swinnen and Teig have a showdown with Tulsa's tandem of Ryan Livesay and Dustin Taylor, also in today's first round.

"Everyone from here on out is very good," Russell said. "In fact, everyone the last two rounds has been very good."

There are 64 players in the singles draw and 32 pairs in the doubles draw. The tournament finals for both draws will take place Sunday.



Emerald

Sven Swinnen will play with Oded Teig in the doubles draw.

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Turn to **Tennis**, page 14