

Track teams near end of indoor season

The Duck squads will head in separate directions this weekend for two different meets in Seattle and Iowa

Track and field

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

The Oregon track and field squads will scatter this weekend to two meets, one in Seattle and one in Ames, Iowa.

The men will head to Iowa for the

Iowa State Classic on Friday and Saturday, while the women will head to Husky-land for the Washington Invitational on Saturday.

The men will be led once again by dual-sport speedster Samie Parker, while several of the Ducks' touted distance runners will make their 2003 debuts. Parker is the only Oregon male to notch an NCAA-provisional time in the indoor season, as he sprinted to a time of 6.68 seconds in the 60-meter dash at the Bodybuilding.com Invitational earlier this month.

Oregon's distance runners will try to make a splash at the Classic. Ryan

Andrus and Eric Logsdon will compete in the 5,000 and the 3,000, respectively, after both capped successful fall cross country seasons by leading Oregon to fifth place at the NCAA Championships.

The women will be led by Niki McEwan, who has returned to form this indoor season after an up-and-down career. She notched a personal-best and school-record-tying vault of 14-1 1/4 at the season-opening Pole Vault Summit. That mark is only an NCAA provisional height, but currently leads the nation. Fellow vaulters Becky Holliday (sev-

enth) and Kristin Riley (25th) are also ranked among the nation's best.

The Duck women distance runners, like the men, will make their debut this weekend in Seattle. Highly-touted recruit Nicole Feest, who had a successful cross country season and even won one meet, will make her track debut in the 3,000. Magdalena Sandoval and Alicia Snyder-Carlson will make their 2003 indoor debuts in the 3,000 and mile, respectively.

Oregon's contingent will be the largest of the young season for the women. A total of 28 athletes will compete in almost every event this

weekend. The field at the Washington Invitational includes Eastern Washington, Portland and Portland State, and partial teams from Arizona State, California, Stanford, UCLA and USC.

For both teams, this weekend's meets signal an approach to the end of the indoor season. The men have only one more meet, the Pacific-10 Conference Invitational, before the NCAA Indoor Championships on March 14. The women will compete in three more meets before the NCAAs.

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Steen

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"As a team, and I know it and the rest of the team knows it, you've got to step up and take what you have and work with it," Steen said in regards to the early season controversy. "It was, like I said, detrimental to the team, and for a second, it was like 'Oh man, what are we going to do?' But you've got to practice the next day. You build from it, and you work from what you have."

Coincidentally, shooting guard is the position that Steen feels most comfortable at and played at for most of last season with Clackamas.

"It's nice to have another guard," Edwards said. "At first, I thought, 'Oh my gosh, we have so many guards.' But so much has happened.

"I'm having a lot of fun. It's a good experience."

Kayla Steen
junior guard

It's just nice to have another body on the team because we're down to nine people."

Steen has started eight of the 16 games since Williams' departure. In Pac-10 play, she is averaging 5.1 points per game, has dished out 27 assists and is credited with 11 steals. From the charity stripe, she has been solid, hitting on 22-of-26 free throws in conference play and at a little more than 80 percent on the season.

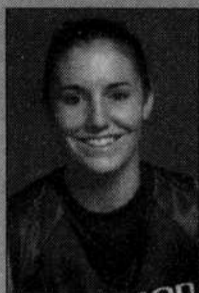
"I'm having a lot of fun," Steen said. "It's a good experience. In the last couple of weeks, I think I've been struggling a bit, but I've been working hard to try and get back

Kayla Steen file

Born: Kayla Ann Steen on April 12, 1982 in Hillsboro

Before Oregon: First-team All-League selection in junior and senior seasons at St. Mary's Academy in Portland. Set Oregon state record with 10 three-pointers in a game. Spent two years at Clackamas Community College, where she earned Southern Division MVP honors both seasons. Averaged 22.8 points last year.

Oregon: Despite suffering from back problems, has started eight games for the Ducks at shooting guard. Averages 5.1 points per game in Pac-10 play. Hitting over 80 percent of free throws on the season.



Steen

into the swing of things and play like I normally can and the coaches want me to."

Since her senior season at St. Mary's Academy, according to Steen, she's had a problem with her lower back. However, until this season, it had not been that big of a problem.

"It's not something I want to use as an excuse," she said. "I think it's more of a mental aspect than a physical aspect that whether or not I'm letting my back take over."

A self-described hard-worker, Steen has yet to have surgery to take care of the problem. She has seen more than just the Oregon doctors — as suggested by the Ducks' team doctor, Dr. Bob Crist — and has decided to evaluate the problem at the end of the season.

Still, Steen, who has been described by Smith as a "warrior," has not let the problem get to her — at least not visibly.

"When she steps on the court, it's kind of like the back injury goes to the back of her mind and it's game

time, and who cares what kind of pain she's in?" Edwards said. "We really don't notice it when she's playing."

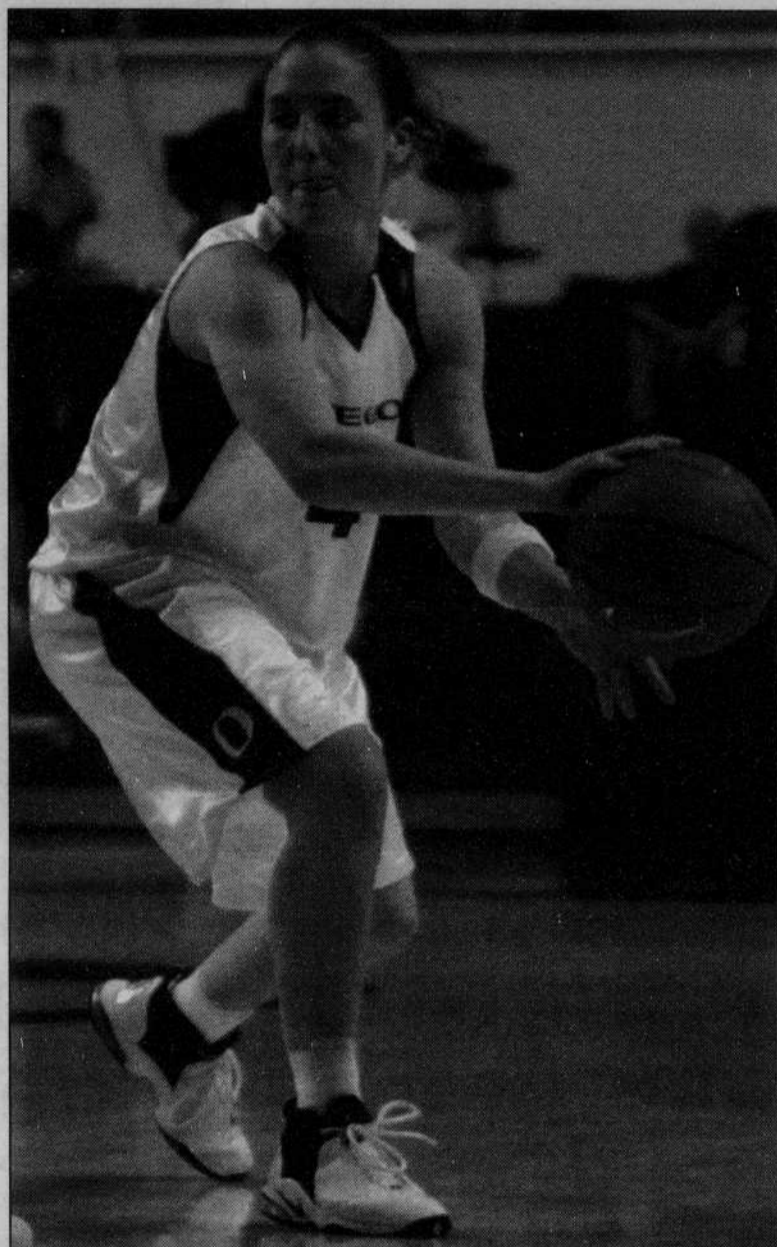
Entering Saturday's Civil War contest — slated to start at noon at McArthur Court — Steen is going to have to put that back pain deep into her mind.

With Oregon (9-13 overall, 5-8 Pac-10) battling to get out of eighth place in the conference standings, Steen is going to need to be her usual self. Of course, that means bringing her hard-work mentality.

Of course, she also suggested some ways for her to help.

"Well, I'm going to hit a 3-pointer, which I haven't done in a long time, for sure," she said. "I'm just going to play really hard and things are going to fall. My shot's going to fall if I'm feeling confident. I'm just going to go out and play as hard as I can, and hopefully it's something that will be contagious and we're going to come out with a big win."

Contact the sports reporter at hankhager@dailyemerald.com.



Danielle Hickey Emerald

Steen has fought through back problems this season, starting eight games.

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There will be an informational meeting on Wednesday, February 19th in the football theater located on the 2nd floor of the Casanova Center (next to Autzen Stadium) Meeting will start at 7 pm.

Pick up your application in the football office on the 2nd floor of the Casanova Center. Applications available February 3rd, 2003. Interviews will be held February 24-28, 2003. You can sign up for your interview time when you pick up your application.

869510 application deadline is February 21, 2003 by 5:00 pm