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SPORTS

Online exclusive
The UO tennis squads were in action Thursday. Read about it online at www.dailyemerald.com.

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Track welcomes hundreds to Hayward

MEN: The Ducks will send the stars out in Saturday's twilight session of the Oregon Invite

Men's track and field

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

If the Oregon Invitational were a mythical Japanese movie beast, it would be Godzilla. Or maybe Mothra.

The Invitational is big. A total of 38 teams from as close as Lane Community College and as far away as Wake Forest will descend on Eugene for a meet so big it needed to be separated into four smaller meets. The decathlon and heptathlon portion started Thursday and ends today. The men's and women's 10,000-meter races will be run tonight at 7:15. Saturday's action includes a day session scheduled to run from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. and a twilight section scheduled to run from 3 p.m. until 8 p.m.

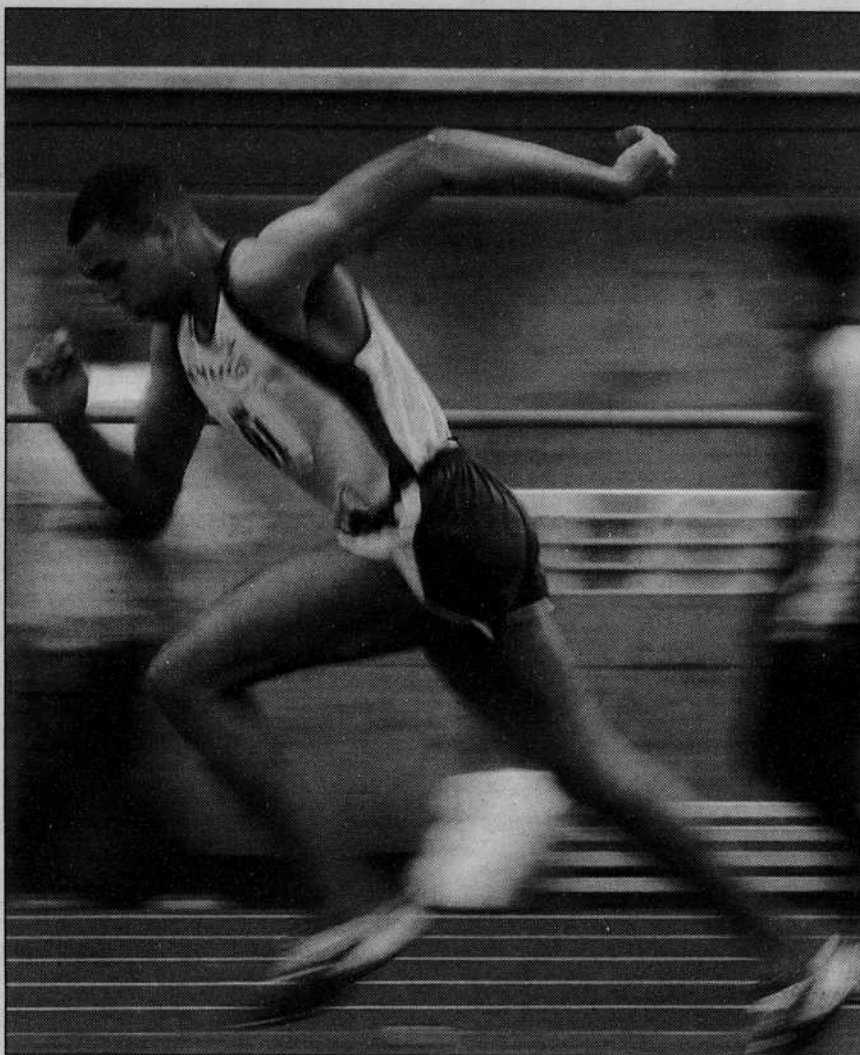
Saturday's twilight meet is the only one that requires tickets, and it is the event with the most interest to Duck fans. Several Duck stars such as Jordan Kent, Samie Parker and Adam Kriz will compete in the evening session.

Many of those stars have already qualified for the NCAA West Regional meet, meaning they're now just tweaking and fine-tuning for the postseason.

"I'm still pushing myself that extra inch," Parker said. "I still want to do better than everybody else."

Parker is one of 19 Ducks who have qualified for the regionals in 13 events. Nine other athletes have qualified for the Pacific-10 Conference Championships but not the regionals.

This weekend's meet will be a prime opportunity for those athletes to hit NCAA marks in front of their home crowd. Among those athletes are Terry Ellis in the 110 hurdles, Matt Scherer in the 400 hurdles, Teddy Davis and Chad Clason in the high jump and Jon Derby in the pole vault. Those events are scheduled for Saturday at 5:35 p.m., 12:25 p.m., 4:30



Mark McCambridge Emerald

Jordan Kent will run the 200-meter dash Saturday for the first time as a Duck.

p.m. and 5:25 p.m., respectively.

But if Duck fans just want to see their stars, they can catch Parker in the 100 at 6:05 p.m., Kent in the 200 at 7 p.m. and Kriz in the hammer at 5:35 p.m. John Stiegeler will throw in the javelin at 3:40 p.m., Trevor Woods will jump in the pole vault at 5:25 p.m. and Brandon Holliday will run the 400 hurdles at 6:47 p.m.

The Oregon Invitational also attracted some top graduate competition. Several athletes will participate in the event unattached, most notably Karl Keska, a former Duck and Olympian. Keska, who ran at Oregon from 1993-96, will highlight the field in the men's 5,000, the last event of Saturday's evening session.

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WOMEN: Oregon gears for the home stretch of its season against the competition at the Invitational

Women's track and field

Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

The Oregon women's track team has rounded the final turn and reached the home stretch after a season that has flown by like the strong wind of the backstretch.

The journey is coming to a close as the Ducks play host to more than 1,000 entries for this weekend's Oregon Invitational. It's the first of two final season regular tests before the championship slate.

With the Oregon Twilight on May 3 and the Pacific-10 Conference Championships a mere two weeks away, the Ducks are ready for the final gear down.

"We feel really good about where we are," Oregon head coach Tom Heinonen said. "This meet's as big as we can let it get. It's a good level of competition for our athletes."

Among the competition arriving at Hayward Field is a large collegiate crowd from the West Coast, some post-collegiate entries, and elite distance squads from Northern Arizona, Wake Forest and Weber State.

The 1,500-meter race should prove competitive with a long list of elite talent, including NCAA indoor mile champion Johanna Nilsson of Northern Arizona, who also won the Mt. San Antonio College Relays in 4 minutes, 10 seconds.

A group of post-collegiate entries include athletes from Nike, Asics and Kathrine Berry of Britain.

The women's 5,000 kicks off Saturday's action at 10 a.m. where redshirt senior Carrie Zografos will dust off her spikes and set her sights on the 17-minute mark, the regional standard.

The cross-country All-American may be a little rusty having not raced since the NCAA Cross Country Championships in the fall because of a hip injury.

"She's short on training so there is no guarantee," Heinonen said. "I don't have a clue if she's ready so we'll take what we can get."

Senior Eri Macdonald will rekindle once again her rivalry in the 800 meters against Washington's Courtney Inman. Macdonald and Inman went head-to-head and side-by-side for 700 meters in the Pepsi Invitational until Macdonald outsprinted the Husky for the win and a season best of 2:07.40.

Macdonald earned a Pac-10 and regional qualifying mark with that season-best time and is among a large group who

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Golf sits ninth at Pac-10 finale

Sophomore Johnna Nealy provides the lone spark for the Ducks during the first round in Corvallis

Golf

Scott Archer
Freelance Sports Reporter

There was at least one silver lining for the Oregon women's golf team after the opening round of the 2003 Pacific-10 Conference Championships.

The Ducks got off to a shaky start Thursday after the team carded a 316 at the par-72, 6,160-yard Trysting Tree Golf Club. Currently, Oregon is one stroke ahead of tournament host and in-state rival Oregon State, and 24 strokes behind day-one leader No. 8 California, which scored a 292 opening round.

The lone bright spot for Oregon was sophomore Johnna Nealy, who is participating in her second Pac-10 Conference Championship tournament after competing as a true freshman last year.

Nealy finished the day tied for 14th overall with a 3-over 75. The day didn't start out well for Nealy as she bogeyed three times in her first nine holes. She started the day on the back nine, but was able to gain some momentum for the Ducks as she birdied holes No. 13, No. 1 and No. 2. Just as things appeared to be headed in the right direction for Nealy, she shot par on the next three holes before she struggled on the fifth hole, where she shot a double bogey. Nealy also bogeyed her final hole of the day, the ninth.

Despite her struggles in the opening and later holes of the course, Nealy was able to put herself into position for a potential top-10 finish. However, two more rounds of golf are still ahead for the Nealy and the rest of the field.

Freshman sensation Therese Wenslow finished the opening

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Softball faces Arizona test

Oregon hosts top-ranked Arizona and No. 12 Arizona State this weekend at Howe Field

Softball

Mindi Rice
Sports Reporter

Oregon softball has a difficult road to travel this weekend. The No. 20 Ducks face their toughest remaining home-stand of the season as they battle No. 1 Arizona and No. 12 Arizona State in three games beginning today at 2 p.m.

"It's a couple tough games coming up," head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "We've got to work and finish the (Pacific-10 Conference) game and hopefully get some wins in there."

Oregon traveled to Arizona in March, losing one game to Arizona State before Arizona swept the Ducks in two games.

The Wildcats are ranked No. 1 in both national polls with an impressive 41-4 record overall, including 10-1 in the Pac-10.

"We have everything to gain and nothing to lose with Arizona," Arendsen said. "I thought we played one outstanding game against them in Tucson — a very hostile field. I thought we struggled in the second game."

In the first game, Oregon's only run support was a solo home run from senior Amber Hutchison. Freshman pitcher Amy Harris struck out six in the 4-1 loss.

The Ducks were flattened the next day by Arizona. The Wildcats scattered eight runs throughout the game, while Oregon managed three hits.

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Jeremy Forrest Emerald

Anissa Meashintubby and the Ducks are preparing to face No. 1 Arizona today and No. 12 Arizona State later this weekend.