

Stiegeler

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national list. He finished third at the Oregon Invitational and won't compete at Saturday's Oregon Twilight because he needs the rest.

You wonder if the teacher's got a trick up his sleeve, a pop quiz for tomorrow's class.

What will Stiegeler's final grade be, for himself?

Stiegeler stands six feet tall and stocky. He looks like a linebacker.

That's not a coincidence, because his roots are on the gridiron. He started throwing javelin in high school to strengthen his all-star quarterbacking arm, and his real strength was in his kicking leg.

Even coming out of Coos Bay, home of Steve Prefontaine and a rich track history, Stiegeler ignored his small amount of talent in the javelin and focused on football. He went to Oregon State with the full intent of kicking footballs through goal posts for the rest of his life.

"I went to OSU because there was a good opportunity for me there with Jose Cortez graduating," Stiegeler said. Cortez went on to kick for the San Francisco 49ers. "Had I not left Oregon State, I would've been the No. 1 kicker heading into the fall, although they did have what's-his-name coming in on scholarship in the fall."

What's-his-name was Ryan Cesca, who went on to start and have a successful career at OSU.

Meanwhile, Stiegeler found himself missing track. He missed the easy practices, the long meets, the friendships that develop between athletes who are forced together by boredom.

So he transferred to Oregon to focus on javelin. Before he did, Oregon State football coach Dennis Erickson sat him down and offered some advice.

"Wherever you go, don't stop kicking," the famous coach said. "You have something that a lot of people don't have, which is a God-given, naturally strong leg."

So Stiegeler took the coach's advice. He tried walking on to the Oregon team even as he was competing in the javelin the next spring. But the Ducks had another what's-his-name coming in on scholarship the next fall, and there wasn't space for Stiegeler. The incoming kicker's name was Jared Siegel.

"I think he's done an adequate job," a grinning Stiegeler said of Siegel. "Slightly more than

adequate, maybe."

Stiegeler soon found the mathematics department at Oregon, and later that love for math turned into a desire to teach the subject in high school.

But as much as Stiegeler touts his love for teaching, one current professor says he might be too smart and too impatient to teach.

"My advice to him would be to go to graduate school in mathematics, and try to do mathematics," said Prof. Shlomo Libeskind, a math professor who has had Stiegeler in several classes. "I think he could pull it off."

Fellow javelin thrower Adam Jenkins, too, said he feels scared for Stiegeler's future pupils.

"I wouldn't want him to be my math teacher because I know he'd be using a lot of big words," Jenkins said, smiling. "He'd make a lot of kids stressed out."

Despite the words of caution, Stiegeler isn't likely to derail from his track any time soon.

"I love to teach, whether it's leading a bible study or teaching in the classroom, whatever," Stiegeler said. "I can't help it, even if the coaches want me to shut up sometimes."

How good was Stiegeler before the injury? He was the Lakers, rolled into one body, of javelin. He won the NCAA Championship at Hayward Field in 2001, and he might as well have been hosting a tea party. He beat his nearest competitor by more than 13 feet.

He had three throws before tearing his ACL at the Texas Relays last year, and he won the competition despite the injury. His toss of 242 feet, 11 inches remained one of the nation's best throws all season. It was a sad testament to a fallen hero, and Stiegeler ended up pulling out of the NCAA meet to make room for fellow Duck Nick Bakke at the bottom of the list.

Stiegeler has been rehabilitating his knee since he went down in Texas. He had surgery on the knee, and Oregon's athletic trainers kept him on a strict rehab program. He threw a javelin for the first time after winter break this year, and didn't seriously throw it until the Oregon Preview over spring break.

"Competitions have been key for me," Stiegeler said. "It's like baking a pie. You can work on all the ingredients, but until you throw it all together, you don't know how it's actually going to taste."

He's still good. Maybe now he's more like the Sacramento Kings



Jeremy Forrest Emerald

Stiegeler said he's preparing to train for the 2004 Olympics this summer. He wants to make the 2004 team and medal in 2008.

rolled into one body instead of the Lakers. His best throw is 220 feet, good enough to put him right behind Jenkins on the national list.

And last weekend he lost. He lost an outdoor javelin competition for the first time since April 28, 2001.

"I should've thrown an easier throw to win the meet, but I was really trying to get my timing back and so I was forcing some big throws," Stiegeler said. "But last weekend my timing started coming together. I know I can clean it up a little bit and get some bigger throws."

Even losing didn't dent Stiegeler's resolve.

"Getting the confidence back is big," he said. "You don't always know what you can do until you do it. I now know that I can throw 240 feet, no problem. And my body didn't break in half. I'm happy about that."

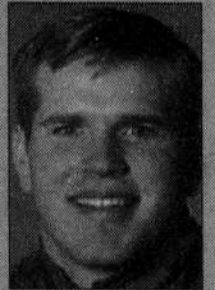
After the collegiate season is done, Stiegeler will focus on making next year's Olympic squad. He has modest Olympic goals, depending on your definition of modest. He only wants to make the Olympic team in 2004, then medal in the 2008 Olympics.

Stiegeler file

Born: John Augustus Stiegeler on Feb. 17, 1980 in Coos Bay.

Before Oregon: As a senior at Marshfield High, finished third at state meet in javelin. But primary focus was football. Spent a year as a placekicker at OSU before transferring to UO.

Oregon: Finished ninth at 2000 Pac-10 Championships before exploding for Pac-10 and NCAA titles in 2001. Tore left ACL in 2001, and returned to competition at Oregon Preview. His best mark this season puts him 23rd nationally.



Stiegeler

The injury will force Stiegeler to start training in August rather than September or October, which is what he's used to. That just means it'll take longer for Stiegeler to shoot for the stars.

Jenkins said Stiegeler is always thinking. Always thinking, always learning and always teaching. Those three qualities could propel him to the same kind of success he had two years ago, success on a na-

tional stage that is set once again for the senior from Coos Bay.

He's always teaching, this teacher turned kicker turned javelin thrower. After an interview in front of the Bowerman Building on Wednesday, Stiegeler turned to the interviewer.

"I'd give that a 9.5," he said. Then Stiegeler, always the thinker, thought about it. "Well, at least a 9, anyway."

Contact the sports editor at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com.

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (May 2). There are a few things you'd like to get this year to fix up your home. Don't dig into precious savings. Use your natural talents instead.
To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.
ARIES (March 21-April 19) _ Today is a 7 _ Don't spend your money on toys or on drinks for your friends. Don't spend much of it on anything now. Bring more of it in.
TAURUS (April 20-May 20) _ Today is an 8 _ You may have the minority opinion, but that doesn't mean you're wrong. You don't have to use a lot of words to win the argument, either.
GEMINI (May 21-June 21) _ Today is a 5 _ Frustrations mount, as something that usually works doesn't. Don't give up. Something you thought wouldn't work might work after all.
CANCER (June 22-July 22) _ Today is an 8 _ When you take care of others, they usually take care of you. Try that again while setting up your agenda for the day.
LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) _ Today is a 6 _ You're looking good, but don't push your luck. Be very respectful to authority figures. You're not fast enough to outrun them.
VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) _ Today is

an 8 _ Others look to you for advice, and well they should. They have their own areas of expertise, but they can't match you at yours.
LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) _ Today is a 5 _ Yours is the sign of partnerships, and a partnership comes in handy now. If ends are not quite meeting, ask a partner to kick in.
SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) _ Today is a 7 _ Get involved in a technical subject. You could make your workload easier and have more time to play with your friends. Eventually.
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) _ Today is a 6 _ Continue to push past your limits, just for the fun of it. You might as well _ It's the only way to enjoy a difficult task.
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) _ Today is a 9 _ A close relative is encouraging you to invest in a joyful excursion. You don't have to feel guilty. Allow yourself to be persuaded.
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) _ Today is a 5 _ New problems are demanding to be solved. Well, actually, they're old problems you've been avoiding. Decide and move on.
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) _ Today is an 8 _ Practice staying cool and calm, even if there are distractions. If you can really focus now, you'll have time to goof off tomorrow.

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