

Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Heinonen runs from past, future

Erik Heinonen will run this weekend. Whatever. I'll run this weekend. You'll run this weekend. My 80-year-old aunt will run this weekend. This is Track Town, for crying out loud. Someday they're going to hire traffic cops to direct all the runners.

But Heinonen's run at the Cardinal Qualifier is worth watching. Because the redshirt freshman hasn't run since 2001. Because back then, he was a super-stud and could yet be a super-stud as a Duck.

Because he's tried this before, this comeback, and fallen flat.

But this weekend is different. Maybe because his dad, legendary track coach Tom Heinonen, is once again embracing track for track as he heads for retirement. Or because Erik's just a little older and a little wiser. Or because if he gets one more ticky-tack injury, they'll devote an Erik Heinonen wing at the new Springfield hospital.

Erik Heinonen will run this weekend. Watch out.

"I'm nervous and anxious," Heinonen said. "I'd say I'm more nervous than anxious."

Back in the day, Heinonen wasn't often nervous about racing because he was king of the preps. Calling him a "phenom" would be like calling Michael Jordan a "basketball player."

The recipe was perfect. He was from Track Town. His dad was a well-respected distance coach who helped build Eugene's running legacy. He was — still is — coat-hanger wirey. He was a self-proclaimed "track geek," a surprisingly necessary ingredient in becoming a distance runner.

By his junior year, he was starring in cross country and track. He finished fifth that year at the national high school cross country championships, right up there with big names like Alan Webb, who went on to break the high school mile record at the Prefontaine Classic.

In his last year at South Eugene, he reached the peak of his high school career with a shocker at the Stanford Invitational. He ran the 10,000-meters in 31 minutes, 26.05 seconds and led the nation's high schoolers in the event. He signed to come to Oregon because, well, that's what you do when your dad coaches a school to three national titles.

Then his body started breaking down like an old Chevy.

"I may have been overzealous in my training because I wanted to prove that what I'd done wasn't a fluke," Heinonen said. "I made some sacrifices, just pushing my body, pushing the envelope and risking going too far. That's not the best way to do things."

He suffered a strained calf. A bout of bursitis in his hip. A problem with his achilles. Every time, he came back too early from one injury, and that led to the next one.

He calls himself his own worst Turn to **Hockaday**, page 12



Peter Hockaday
Two minutes for crosschecking

Ducks anticipate NCAA berth

Oregon has three conference games remaining before learning its regional destination and opponent Sunday

Softball notes

Mindi Rice
Sports Reporter

For the first time since the 2000 season, the Ducks are looking to the upcoming announcement of the NCAA regional brackets with anticipation.

After wrapping up regular-season play with a doubleheader against Stanford, No. 18 Oregon will wait until Sunday evening to learn its regional destination.

"Knowing that they can't put two teams from the same conference at a regional is wonderful," head coach Kathy Arendsen said.

Eight locations were selected by the NCAA Division I Softball Committee to host a regional tournament, with each location hosting eight teams. Only one Pacific-10 Conference school — No. 1 Arizona — was selected as a host school for regionals.

The other regional hosts selected were No. 3 Texas, No. 6 Cal State Fullerton, No. 11 Nebraska, No. 14 Michigan, No. 16 Alabama, No. 25 Florida and unranked Fresno State. Host schools are not guaranteed a bid to the tournament.

"I'd rather take on the Texas and Oklahomas. As good as they are, I'd rather go take on those than these guys any day," Arendsen said of the Pac-10.

The Ducks won four preseason games against teams currently ranked in the top 25. They also hold an 8-10 Pac-10 record, with six of those wins against teams ranked ahead of Oregon in current polls.

Games at all eight regionals are scheduled for May 15-18. The tournament will be played in a double-elimination format.

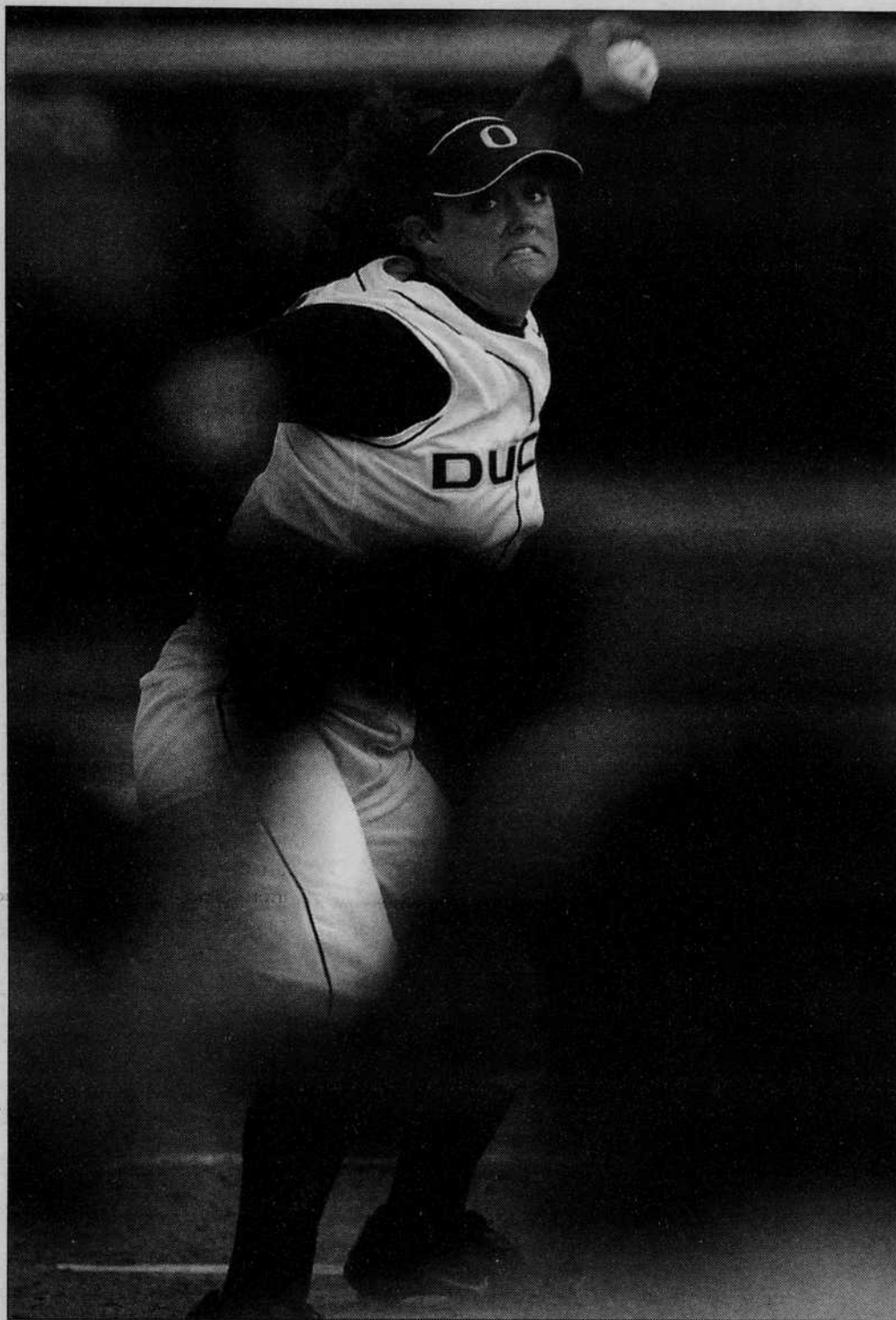
The 64 teams are selected two ways. Twenty-six teams receive an automatic berth from their conference as season champions. The other 38 teams are chosen by an at-large selection.

This is the first time the field was expanded to 64 teams as well as the first time regional sites were announced prior to team selection.

Oregon will find out its fate Sunday at 7 p.m., when first-round pairings are announced.

Oregon State secures winning record

Unranked Oregon State guaranteed itself a winning record when it upset then-No. 4 Washington on Friday. The 4-2 win in Seattle gave the Beavers their 31st victory of the season and only their second-ever victory at Washington.



Adam Amato Emerald

Lindsey Kontra and the Ducks will find out which regional site they're headed for when it's announced Sunday.

Despite Friday's victory, the Beavers remain eighth in the Pac-10 with an overall record of 31-27 and a conference record of 4-14. Oregon

State is also the only team in the conference not ranked in either top-25 poll.

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Panova named Pac-10 Player of the Year

Manuel Kost and Courtney Nagle are also honored as the Pac-10's yearly awards are announced

Tennis

Mindi Rice
Sports Reporter

Three NCAA Championship-bound Ducks were given postseason honors by Pacific-10 Conference tennis coaches Tuesday.

Sophomore Daria Panova was named Pac-10 Women's Tennis Player of the Year, while teammate and doubles partner Courtney Nagle was selected as an All-Pac-10 honorable mention.

Sophomore Manuel Kost earned a spot on the men's second team.

Panova won Oregon's first Player of the Year award for tennis since 1988.

"It's a great honor for her and the program," women's head coach Nils Schyllander said. "She's proven throughout the whole year why she's deserving of the award."

The Moscow, Russia, native swept the Pac-10 singles titles this year, winning the indoor and outdoor championships.

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Daria Panova won both the indoor and outdoor individual Pac-10 Championships this season.
Adam Amato Emerald