

Sports Editor:  
Peter Hockaday  
peterhockaday@dailymerald.com

# SPORTS

**Best bet**  
Stanley Cup Finals:  
New Jersey at Anaheim  
5 p.m. Saturday, ABC

Friday, May 30, 2003

## Top 5 or bust: Track heads to regionals

The men have a handful of athletes leading their fields, but the middle Ducks will be key

### Men's track and field

**Peter Hockaday**  
Sports Editor

Two weeks ago at the Pacific-10 Conference Championships, Washington State sprinters Anthony Buchanan and Bennie Chatman ganged up on Oregon's Samie Parker.

The Cougar runners laughed and talked about Parker. They tried to get a recall, knowing Parker has a blistering start.

"It kinda — well, I can't say 'kinda' — it did work," Parker said Wednesday. "It threw me off, because I was going out there to win it. I should have won it."

Parker finished third behind Buchanan and Chatman. Today at the West Regionals in Stanford, Calif., it's time for some Parker payback.

"Hopefully they're ready this week because I'm bringing it all," Parker said. "With the little games they were playing, that just gets me fired up even more."

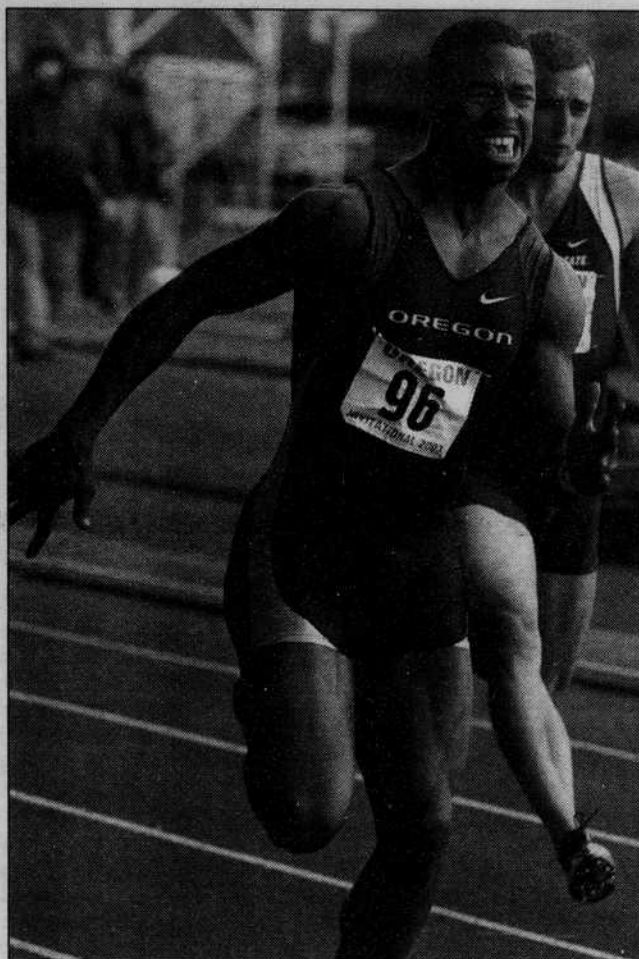
So that's Parker's motivation for the regional meet. For most of the rest of the Oregon men's track and field squad, making the NCAA Championships will be motivation enough.

The new regional-meet system presents a unique challenge to every last athlete in the nation: Win or go home. Finish in the top five of your event or miss the NCAA Championships, unless you get one of the rare wild-card entries.

The regional-meet system might just benefit a team like Oregon.

"I think it's great for our group because we don't have the SC star power that was evident down at Pac-10s," pole vaulter Trevor Woods said. "We have lots of depth throughout. It's really good for a guy like (800-meter runner) Ryan Flaherty, who might not have the times to get to the national meet, but he finishes top five this weekend, he's in there."

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Danielle Hickey Emerald

Samie Parker will face his WSU adversaries this weekend in Stanford.

Oregon sends a talented group of athletes to the regional meet to make attempts at nationals

### Women's track and field

**Jesse Thomas**  
Sports Reporter

It's come to that time of year when the best of the best get together.

Nearly four months to the day since the outdoor track and field season started, the competitors have been whittled down to the elite.

But unlike other years, athletes have to prove their abilities once more before taking the big step to the NCAA Championships.

In the first ever NCAA West Regional Championships this weekend, the Oregon women's team is sending 21 individuals and a 4x400-meter relay to do battle in Stanford.

The idea for the new system came from the U.S. Track Coaches Association in hopes the meet would lower the stresses of earning national marks early in the season.

Athletes who place in the top five of their event for each of the four regions are automatically qualified for nationals. An additional six to eight athletes per event nationally will be invited based on season performance.

Of the near two dozen athletes for Oregon, six are ranked top-10 in the region, and two stand atop the nation.

Oregon's pole vault squad leads the way, sending five athletes to the competition at Cobb Track and Angell Field. Senior Becky Holliday earned her first Pacific-10 Conference crown two weeks ago and is the nation's top-ranked pole vaulter with a personal best of 14 feet, 6 inches.

Senior All-American Niki McEwen ranks fourth nationally at 14-1 1/4. Her runner-up finish at Pac-10s tied her best finish ever at the meet despite clearing 13-3 1/2.

On the runway, the sophomore All-American javelin duo of

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## No HOLLIDAY

Hurdler Brandon Holliday has faced a landslide of adversity this month, but now he's focused on the regional meet

### Men's track and field

**Peter Hockaday**  
Sports Editor

At his final practice before hitching a plane ride to California for the NCAA West Regionals, Oregon hurdler Brandon Holliday stoically went through his warmups Wednesday at Hayward Field.

Sprinters Samie Parker and Jason Willis horsed around nearby, chasing each other around the track. A group of women's pole vaulters ran by Holliday, nearly clipping him.

But in that moment, an Apache helicopter could've fallen from the sky and crashed into the Hayward grandstand. A gang of killer raccoons could've ran onto the track and ripped the rest of the Oregon athletes to shreds.

Holliday, it seemed, would've stretched and jogged through the whole thing.

This week has been all about focus for Holliday, an athlete whose entire existence is defined by focusing on the next obstacle on the track.

But recently, Holliday has been facing obstacles off the track. On May 11, one week before the Pacific-10 Conference Championship meet, Holliday was involved in an incident at Taylor's Bar and Grille that is still under investigation by the Athletic Department and police. According to a police report, Holliday was punched by football free safety Keith Lewis after a brief verbal altercation.

Holliday still hesitates to talk about it. But undoubtedly, the incident played some part in his Pac-10 performance a week later. Holliday fell over a hurdle and didn't make it out of the preliminary round in the 400-meter hurdles.

That, after Holliday won the Pac-10 crown in the event in 2002.

"A lot of stuff happened before that meet, and during the race I was trying to not press so much, just to get through the round," Holliday said. "I just lost focus for a second and hit a hurdle."

Focus. He lost it for a second two weeks ago, and today he'll try to get it back. He's ranked seventh in the West Region heading into today's meet. He runs the prelims at 7:45 tonight and the finals Saturday evening at 4:35. The West Regionals are being held at Stanford's Cobb Track and Angell Field.

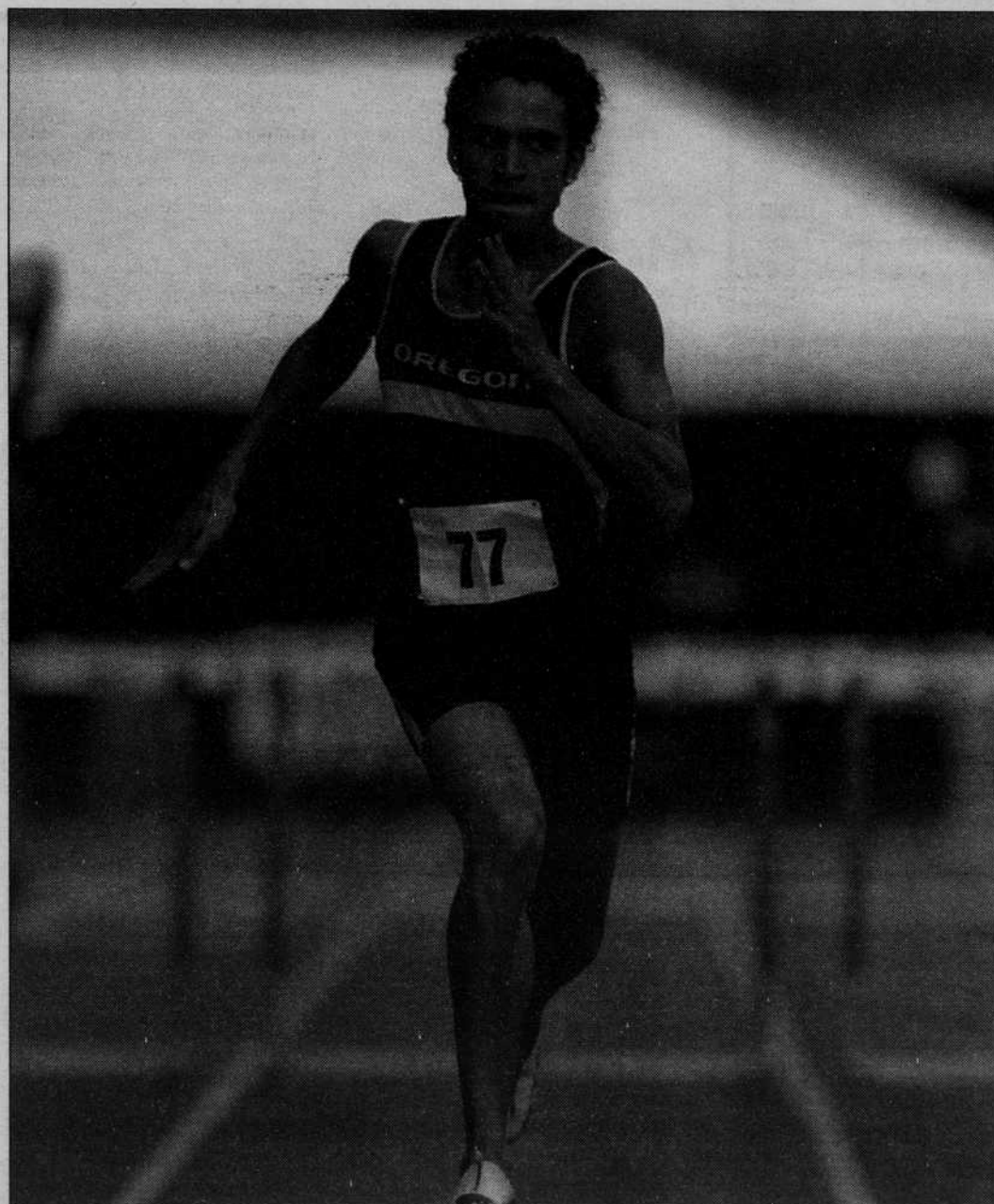
Fellow Oregon hurdler Terry Ellis thinks Holliday's fall at Pac-10s could have had more to do with the track itself than Holliday's mental state. He said the USC track, which hosted Pac-10s, has a different setup from most.

"The curves are shorter, and the straightaways are longer," Ellis said. "In relation to our track, Stanford's track, anybody else's track, USC has that shorter curve. So the turn is sharper, and that's where he fell."

If you've got a hearing aid, you turn it up to hear Holliday. He's no chest-thumper. But this month's adversity isn't the first he's faced in his career. Not that everything's been bar fights and police reports.

Two years ago, Holliday made the Pac-10s but didn't make Oregon's list of participants. Through an odd conference rule, only a certain amount

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Adam Amato Emerald

Brandon Holliday will use a fall at Pac-10s and recent off-track troubles to motivate him this weekend at regionals.