

Unkind cut ends UO season

Junior Mike Sica advances to the final round qualifying as an individual while his teammates will play no more

Golf

Scott Archer
Freelance Sports Reporter

A surprising announcement made by the NCAA on Thursday morning meant that the 30-team field would be cut to 18 teams after the third round at the NCAA Men's Golf Championships in Stillwater, Okla.

The announcement came as a surprise to everyone involved as it was only expected to take place in the event of extreme weather delays.

The NCAA released this statement prior to the first swing of the day: "(The cut) has been made to provide for the necessary contingency of a playoff...The decision was based upon the pace of play for the first two rounds, which far exceeded what we anticipated and would jeopardize a timely comple-

tion to the championship. To do this we felt we had to have a cut. This is a very difficult golf course. We simply ran into a pace of play problem that had to be addressed."

And with that, Oregon's season came to an abrupt end.

In the end it was Oregon's dismal opening-round performance that sealed the Ducks' fate in Oklahoma.

Oregon, needing to place among the top 18 teams to advance to the final round of the NCAA Championships at the 7,301-yard, par-72 Karsten Creek Golf Course, couldn't muster up enough magic after it started the tournament with the field's worst opening round. The Ducks fell five strokes back from the 18th spot, after shooting a 301 Thursday afternoon.

"I don't think the cut was a very wise decision," head coach Steve Nosler said. "But it did not make a difference to our approach, and we were all right today — especially our top three guys."

Inconsistent play from Oregon's two seniors didn't help the Ducks' cause, as senior Chris Carnahan shot a 10-over-par 82 Thursday,

which was an improvement from his 16-over 88 on Tuesday.

Oregon was led by junior Mike Sica, who for the second day shot a 2-over 74 to finish the tournament at 5-over 221 for a 13th-place tie. Sica will be invited back today to play individually after he finished among the top 16 individuals whose teams did not make the cut.

"I am disappointed that my teammates won't get to play," Sica said. "It will be difficult not having the team out there, but I'll give it my best."

The Ducks also received a stellar outing from freshman Gregg LaVoie, who shot a team-tourney best 1-under 71 to finish the tourney 16-over par, which tied him for 72nd overall.

Senior John Ellis shot a third round 2-over 74, which helped make up for his career worst 20-over 92 on Tuesday's opening round. Ellis finished the tournament 24-over and tied for 115th in his final Oregon tournament.

Scott Archer is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

Holliday

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of athletes from each school can participate in Pac-10s. Two years ago, Holliday was the unlucky Duck who got to watch the Pac-10 meet on television — tape delayed.

He came back from that adversity to stun the conference and win the Pac-10 title last season. His time at Pac-10s was more than a half-second better than anything he ran during the 2002 regular season.

His time — still a personal best — of 50.73 seconds was also an NCAA Provisional qualifier. If it were this year, Holliday would've ran into the NCAA West Regional and probably would have been hot enough to make the NCAA Championships. But that was before regional meets, and Holliday once again didn't make the cut. His time was .11 seconds shy of a berth in the NCAA Championships.

"I know last year I won — not that I didn't earn it — but last year there were a lot of good guys that weren't there who are there this year," Holliday said. "They don't suck, the guys that beat me this year."

All that is rocket-fuel for Holliday's fire this year. Even if he's soft-spoken and humble, Holliday has a passion for track that burns in the inner recesses of his heart.

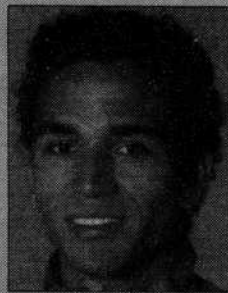
"I don't think there's anybody on this team who wants it or craves it

Holliday file

Born: Brandon Michael Holliday on April 15, 1982 in Billings, Mont.

Before Oregon: As a senior at Beaverton High, finished third in state 110 hurdles final and 13th in high jump. Also played cornerback for football team.

Oregon: As a freshman in 2001, qualified for Pac-10s with a 52.83, but didn't make the trip because of roster-size limits. Came back in 2002 and clocked a 50.73 in the Pac-10 finals to take the conference crown. His times steadily got better in 2002, as he finished under 52 seconds four times on the season. This year, clocked a season-best time of 51.18 at Oregon Invitational, a mark that ranks him seventh in the West Region heading into this weekend's regional-qualifier meet.



Holliday

more than Brandon does," Ellis said. "On and off the track, he's all about what he's going to do on the track. He's always drinking water, always hydrating, staying out of trouble in places he shouldn't be, always thinking about what he's going to do on the track. He's got the heart of a lion."

This weekend, Holliday will respond in some way to all the pressure, all the obstacles he's faced in the past month.

Whether or not he runs into the NCAA Championships is seemingly up to him. It's simply a matter of focus.

Contact the sports editor at peterhockaday@dailymerald.com.

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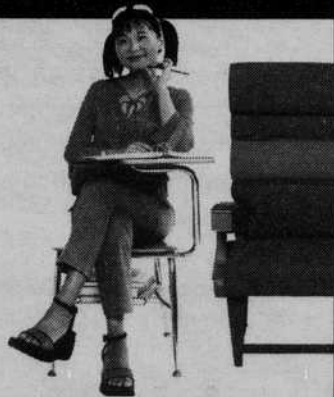
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