

Duck harriers get back in action at Invitational

Oregon will send its men's squad and two women to the 2003 Pre-NCAA Invitational on Saturday

Scott Archer
Freelance Reporter

The Oregon men's team hasn't run in quite some time, but it will receive valuable feedback after this weekend.

DUCK CROSS COUNTRY

The Ducks will send nine runners to the 2003 Pre-NCAA Invitational Saturday in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Many ranked teams are expected to participate, and Oregon is excited to see where the team is at midway through its season.

Previous to this weekend, Oregon competed in the Pier Park Preview — a race with mostly Oregon's 'B' runners — and the Roy Griak invitational, where the Ducks finished fourth.

After this weekend's race, the Ducks will take two weeks off before they run in the Pacific-10 Conference Championships. That will be followed by the NCAA Western Regional Championship in Pullman, Wash., and, depending on how the team fares at that point, the NCAA Championships.

The NCAA Championships will be held at the same venue as the Pre-NCAA Invitational, with many of the same teams and individuals expected to compete in both.

Rankings ... again.

Despite being dormant last weekend, the Duck men moved up one spot in the cross country rankings to No. 7.

Oregon was helped by the poor performance of Arkansas, which fell from its previous No. 4 ranking down to No. 9. Otherwise, the top-nine positions stayed the same, with Stanford continuing its stronghold on the No. 1 spot. Oregon and Stanford are two of the five teams from the Pac-10 in the nation's top 30. The Ducks and

the Cardinal are the only two Pac-10 teams ranked in the top 10, according to a new poll released Oct. 7.

However, rankings do not play as much of a major role in deciding the fate of a team's season as it does in football. The Ducks must still capture a top-two finish at regionals or receive an at-large bid in order to be invited to race in the NCAA Championships, regardless of ranking.

Down and out ... sort of

If it seems there hasn't been any mention of one of Oregon's strongest runners, it's no mistake.

Senior Laura Harmon has red-shirted her season after experiencing a case of pneumonia during the summer that set back her training and conditioning.

"I based my decision on not getting as good a summer as I wanted to," Harmon said. "I have a goal to go to the NCAA (Championship) and be the best I can be."

However, Harmon has participated in Oregon's first two races of the season, competing as an unattached. Despite her scores not counting, she has shown a powerful work ethic and has finished strong in Oregon's first full varsity races. Harmon finished ninth at the Sundodger Invitational and sixth overall at the Willamette Invitational.

Harmon continues to work out with the team and is involved in every aspect of the program. That is, everything except the races.

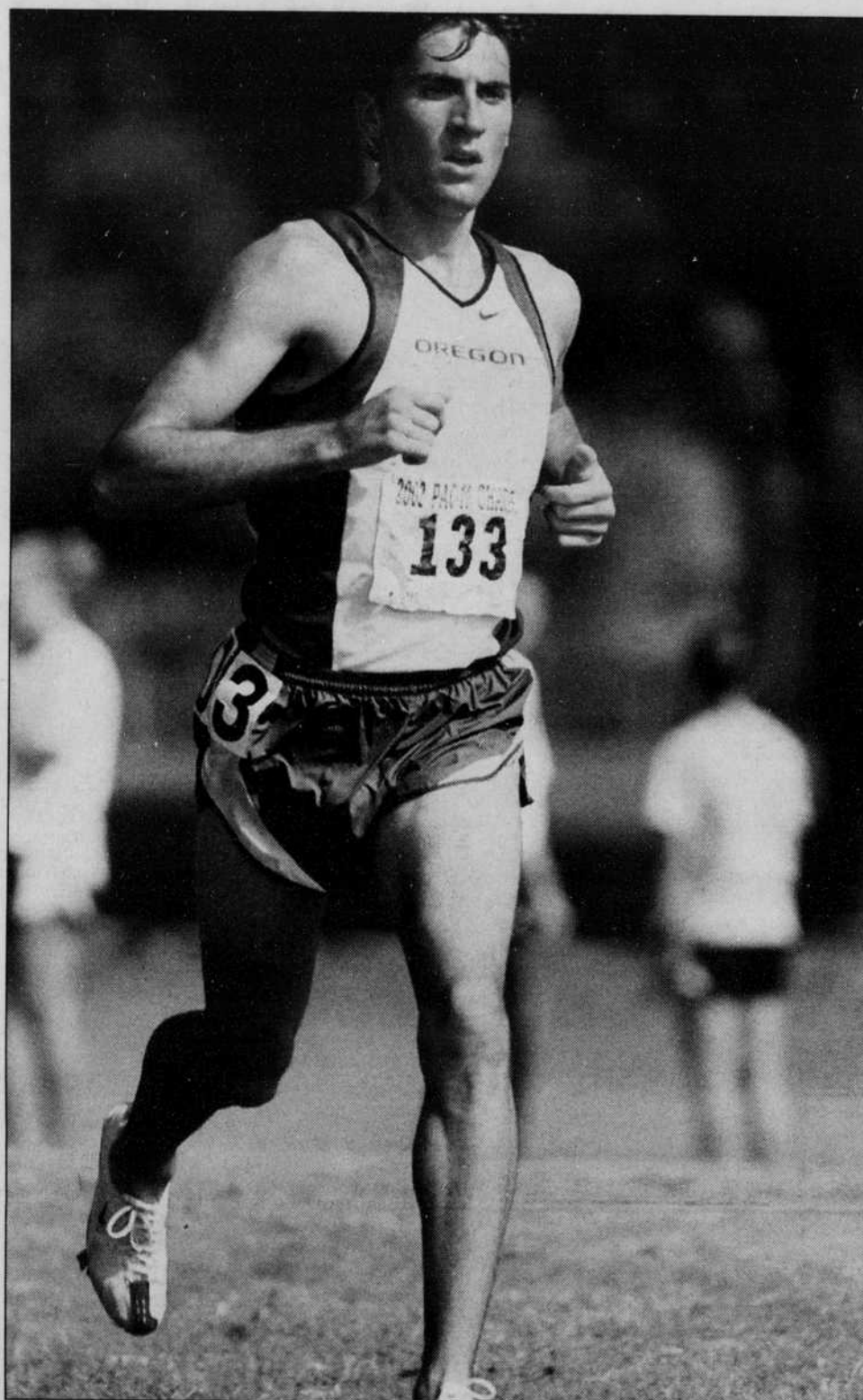
With new head coach Marnie Mason adjusting the intensity and distances of practice, Harmon has seen an improvement in her times.

"I was 22 seconds faster (this year, compared to last year at Willamette Invitational)," Harmon said. "I attribute that to different kinds of practice."

She isn't second guessing her decision, but some doubts remain about the decision to redshirt.

"It makes you question it," Harmon said.

Scott Archer is a freelance sports reporter for the Emerald.



Brett Holts and the Ducks will visit Cedar Falls, Iowa this weekend for the Pre-NCAA Invitational.
Geoff Thurner
Oregon Media Services

Red Sox come back to force final game in New York

Nomar Garciaparra's triple in the seventh inning helps Boston defeat the Yankees, 6-4, on Wednesday

By Jim Salisbury
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

NEW YORK — After 25 meetings this season, it comes down to one final game between the Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees.

Game 7 of the American League Championship Series.

On Thursday night at Yankee Stadium.

Winner goes to the World Series.

The Red Sox forced a deciding game by coming from behind to beat their arch-rivals, 9-6, in Game 6 on Wednesday at the big house in the Bronx.

That set up Thursday night's win-or-go-home showdown between Boston's Pedro Martinez and New York's Roger Clemens.

"It's what we wanted — a Game 7," Red Sox shortstop Nomar Garciaparra said. "Two great teams. Go out, do

our best, and see what happens."

The teams met 19 times in the regular season. The Yankees won 10, the Red Sox nine.

Now, they are tied at three games apiece in the American League Championship Series.

"I guess it was supposed to come down to a Game 7, as much as I hate to admit it," said Yankees manager Joe Torre, whose team was nine outs from winning the pennant when it squandered a two-run lead in the seventh inning.

"We battled each other all year. There's no quit in either team. At least we know tomorrow is the last day.

"I don't know any two teams more evenly matched than us and the Red Sox. Now it comes down to 7, and you really have to talk yourself into believing that it'll be just another baseball game," he said.

The Yankees haven't hosted a seventh game in a postseason series since 1957, when they lost in the World Series to the Milwaukee Braves.

Low Burdette beat Don Larsen in that game.

Red Sox fans hope Martinez has a

little Burdette in him Thursday night. Yankees fans hope Clemens pitches as well as he did in Game 3, when he beat Martinez at Fenway Park.

Had the Yankees won Wednesday, Clemens would have been available to pitch Game 1 of the World Series on Saturday.

Now, the Yanks are just hoping to get there.

The Red Sox go into Thursday night's game with a healthy dose of momentum after the bats of several key players finally awakened in the Sox' 16-hit attack.

David Ortiz, who entered the game with just three hits in 16 at-bats in the series, had a pair of singles, including one that tied the score, and three RBIs.

Kevin Millar, 3 for 19 in the series going into the game, had pair of hits.

AL batting champion Bill Mueller broke out of a 2 for 17 skid with three hits.

But the bat that the Red Sox were most happy to see ignite belonged to Garciaparra, the man who often makes this team go.

Garciaparra was just 2 for 19 in the series entering the day. He had four hits, including a leadoff triple to begin

the Red Sox' decisive rally in the seventh inning.

"Good for him and good for us," Red Sox manager Grady Little said. "We knew it would happen sooner or later for Nomar."

Garciaparra's triple came with the Sox trailing, 6-4. It was sweet on a couple of levels for the Red Sox. First, he ended up scoring on the play on an overthrow to third by leftfielder Hideki Matsui. Second, the triple came off reliever Jose Contreras. The Red Sox wanted Contreras badly last winter, only to lose out to the Yankees in their bid to sign him.

Red Sox president Larry Lucchino was so angry that his team didn't get Contreras that he called the Yankees baseball's "Evil Empire," adding another chapter to the two teams' long-and-heated rivalry.

After Garciaparra scored to make it 6-5, Manny Ramirez followed with a booming double to center. He scored on Ortiz's single off the first base bag.

Contreras got Millar to pop out for the first out before Mueller singled, putting runners at first and second. Torre replaced Contreras with left-hander Felix Heredia, who threw a

wild pitch to advance the runners.

Heredia got the second out, a strikeout of Trot Nixon. Torre then rolled the dice. With first base open, he had Heredia walk switch-hitter Jason Varitek to load the bases for left-handed-hitting Johnny Damon.

Heredia walked Damon, scoring Ortiz with the go-ahead run.

Had Contreras just been able to get through the seventh, the Yankees probably would have gone to Mariano Rivera for his third two-inning save of the series. But this time, the Yanks couldn't get the ball to Rivera.

Torre didn't second-guess himself for walking Varitek and taking his chances on Damon.

"It wasn't an easy decision, but Heredia shouldn't be on the mound there if I don't have confidence in him to handle something like that," Torre said. "Varitek had been swinging the bat well righthanded. It was something I felt we had to do. We'll just have to live with the results."

And now it's on to Game 7.

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