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Men's track succeeds in Texas

Redshirt freshman pole vaulter David Moore turns in one of the Ducks' top performances

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

Thursday marked a solid afternoon in the young Oregon career of David Moore.

The redshirt freshman pole vaulter tied for 10th, clearing 16 feet, 4 3/4 inches at the 77th-annual Clyde Littlefield Texas Relays, improving on his mark of 15-11 two weeks ago at the Oregon Preview.

Moore just missed a pair of attempts at 16-10 3/4, which would have been a personal best. He cleared 16-8 3/4 at the 2003 Cardinal Invitational in Stanford, Calif.

The Orinda, Calif., native said he would like to clear 17-6 by the end of the year.

MEN'S TRACK

"(Clearing 16-4 3/4 is) pretty good," Moore said. "I'm not disappointed

but I would like to go higher."

Moore is in his first season competing for the Ducks, after participating unattached in several meets during his redshirt year. The former prep All-American brought an impressive résumé to Oregon, finishing tied for seventh nationally as a senior with a personal best of 16-6.

Despite his quality marks, Moore and other Duck pole vaulters are often overshadowed by freshman phenom Tommy Skipper. Moore, however, said he enjoys competing with Skipper and has no problem with the attention the Sandy native receives.

"(Skipper) is really good to jump with and brings a lot of energy to our team," Moore said. "It's just a lot of fun to jump with him."

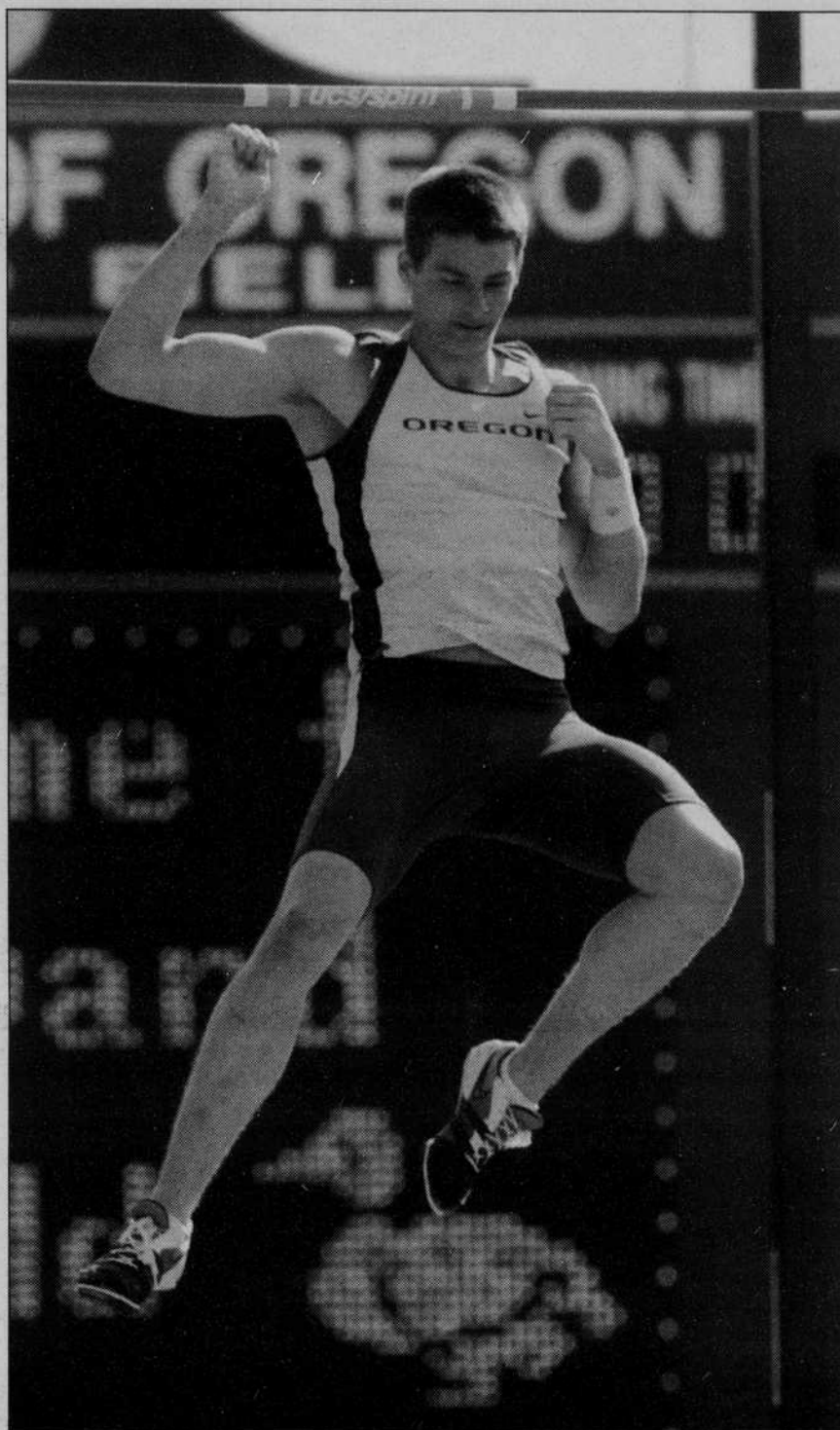
Skipper is set to compete Saturday at the Texas Relays.

Senior Trevor Woods and redshirt sophomore Jon Derby also competed in the pole vault for Oregon Thursday. Woods tied for eighth, clearing the same final bar height as Moore (16-4 3/4) but finishing in a better position due to fewer overall misses.

Derby finished with a no-height after failing to clear his opening bar of 15-11.

All three Duck pole vaulters have already met the Pacific-10 Conference

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Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

Redshirt freshman David Moore cracked the top 10 in the pole vault Thursday at the 77th-annual Clyde Littlefield Texas Relays. He cleared 16 feet, 4 3/4 inches.

Women hammer throwers miss marks in Austin

Katie Kersh finishes last in the hammer; while Megan Kriz fouls on each attempt

By Alex Tam
Sports Reporter

The Oregon women's track and field team took to the field of competition for the 77th annual Clyde Littlefield Texas Relays at the University of Texas at Austin.

The women sent only their throwers to the meet, which was held at Mike A. Myers Stadium, the site where the 2004 NCAA Championships will take place in two months.

In Thursday's competition, two Oregon women hammer throwers participated. However, both athletes struggled in the event and finished in the bottom part of the standings.

In the Flight 1 section of the hammer event, junior Katie Kersh ended up in ninth place out of the 13 competitors. Kersh, a transfer from Sierra Junior College in Sacramento, improved in each of her subsequent throws, however. The third-year Duck achieved a first mark of 49.10 meters that placed her eighth heading into the second throw.

Kersh, also a two-time letterwinner in softball and volleyball two years ago in junior college, improved her second effort to 49.72 meters. Despite the better score, Kersh moved down to ninth place after Texas Tech junior Olivia Clardy made a mark of 51.46 meters that vaulted her up to the sixth position from the ninth spot.

Kersh's last throw resulted in her best effort of the day at 50.22 meters or 164-09. Kersh's performance regressed from last week when she led the Ducks after posting a score of 165-04 at the Stanford Invitational.

In the overall standings, Kersh finished in last place at 21st among competitors who earned a legal mark. Colorado State senior Loree Smith won the event after an impressive first throw of 67.05 meters or 220-00. The mark topped the second-place finisher, Louisiana State sophomore Britney Henry, by about 18 feet.

Kersh — a Willow Creek, Calif., native — has a personal best in the hammer at 173-5, which ranks her second among Oregon's hammer team and would be a qualifying mark for the Pacific-10 Conference and Regionals.

The other Oregon entrant, sophomore Megan Kriz, also endured a tough day. Kriz, a transfer from Portland State and one of several other transfers on the team, failed to produce a legal mark as she fouled on each of her three attempts.

The Oregon women are still in a transition period under first-year head coach of the entire track and field program, Martin Smith. New assistant coach Lance Deal is overseeing the throwers units and is leading the ongoing effort to rebuild

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Football team begins spring workouts Saturday at Autzen

The Ducks return a core group of players who had an impact in 2003

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

NEW YORK — As much as things have stayed the same for the Oregon football team, just as much has changed.

Gone are the likes of Keith Lewis, Kevin Mitchell and Samie Parker, players who have become institutions in recent years. They've helped lead the Ducks to bowl after bowl, but now move on to become professionals.

Back are Kellen Clemens, Demetrius Williams, Devan Long and a whole core group of players who have burst onto the scene in recent seasons.

It's this group that will get its chance to get on the gridiron as a team Saturday as Oregon opens spring practices. The group will start its first of 15 NCAA-mandated practices at 11 a.m. at the Autzen Stadium-Casanova Center complex area.

The last time the Ducks opened

up spring practices, they were coming off a flat, uninspired loss to Wake Forest in the Seattle Bowl. This year, Oregon is four months removed from a one-point loss to Minnesota in the Sun Bowl.

Despite the differences in the two seasons, Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said the Ducks won't run practices any differently. There are still holes to fill and players can get rusty after having some time

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off, even though most have been working out since the game against the Golden Gophers.

"I think there's a lot of opportunity with this team," Bellotti said. "I think there are several key positions open on offense and even more on defense. Opportunity creates excitement."

Among those positions are linebacker and the secondary. Mitchell and David Martin will move on, leaving Jerry Matson as the only returning starter at linebacker.

Bellotti mentioned Ramone Reed,

Justin Andrews and Anthony Trucks as prime candidates to fill those vacated spots, although Trucks will not participate during the spring because of shoulder surgery.

While there are spots to be filled, there are also players that saw little or no action during the 2003 season that will need to catch up. That includes Haloti Ngata, injured against Mississippi State, and wide receiver Keith Allen, who was expected to fight for a starting spot opposite Parker. Allen, however, was lost for the season in August.

"The biggest thing for all those guys is we want to get them back into game condition," Bellotti said. "We will go one step at a time."

Clemens returns after a super sophomore season. The Burns native led the Oregon offense with precision in the Sun Bowl, putting the exclamation point on a strong finish to the season.

Bellotti wouldn't say there is no quarterback rotation, much like last season with Clemens and Jason Fife. After all, he expects a lot out of the soon-to-be junior.

"A quarterback has to lead by

example and by their commitment to work ethic," Bellotti said. "He also has to pull people along."

Joining Clemens behind center will be Johnny DuRocher, who spent last season as the team's third-string quarterback but never played, allowing Oregon to redshirt him. DuRocher has the inside track on the backup position.

However, that doesn't take into account Dennis Dixon, one of Oregon's top recruits prior to last season. He grayshirted the season, choosing to enroll at Oregon for winter term.

"I still have yet to see him throw a football," Bellotti said. "I know he is an excellent athlete. He is somewhat raw."

In addition to Trucks, wide receivers Marcus Maxwell and Kyle Weatherpoon will be held out of spring practice because of injury.

Oregon will spread its 15 practices out over a month, with the annual spring game set to be played on May 1.

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Oregon head football coach Mike Bellotti and the Ducks begin their 15 spring practices at 11 a.m. Saturday. It is the team's first official practice since its 1-point loss to Minnesota in the Sun Bowl four months ago.