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Lauren Wimer Photographer

Rachael Kriz has benefited from a change of scenery with the Oregon women's track and field program.

COACHES

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motivating the athletes to perform to their best.

"I love my individual coach (Rock Light)," Donovan said. "He is so uplifting. He tells us exactly what we need to do and he knows when we're ready and we know when we're ready. He has faith in us and he's bringing this program back into it."

Coaches get thumbs up

Ask many of the Oregon women track and field athletes about their assessment of the new coaching staff led by head coach Martin Smith midway through the season.

"It's a complete 180 (from last year)," javelin thrower Sarah Malone said. "I finally feel I'm a part of the Oregon track and field program that I imagined and that I knew when I was a kid growing up."

"I feel more a part of a family than I ever have. Our coaches are incredible."

Malone, a redshirt junior from Newberg, holds the Oregon javelin record at 179 feet, 7 inches, which she set at one of track's biggest stages this year, the Texas Relays. In that event, Malone also defeated the current American javelin record holder, Kim Kreiner.

"In the past, we trained until failure," Malone said. "Obviously, that's wrong and that's been something that's been a total turnaround."

Her individual coach, Lance Deal, said he has enjoyed his experience as

the first-year throwers' coach and hopes to return the women's program back to prominence.

"Coach Smith's philosophy is let's be the best team we can be," Deal said. "Let's get ourselves back (into the elite of) the Pac-10."

Helping out

Malone's success is rubbing off on her fellow javelin teammates.

One of the beneficiaries is redshirt junior Rachael Kriz, who is adjusting to competing in multiple events that also includes the high jump.

Kriz praised Malone for the latter's guidance this season.

"Sarah is amazing and incredible," Kriz said. "I don't know what else you can say about her other than she's just a marvel to watch. She is always at practice and always letting us know what we can improve on and it all ends up in being a very good practice environment."

Contact the sports reporter at alexam@dailyemerald.com.

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SPORTS BRIEF

Nyhus nabs Pitcher of the Week award

Oregon pitcher Ani Nyhus earned her second Pacific-10 Conference Pitcher of the Week award Tuesday.

Nyhus went 2-1 during the weekend, picking up wins against then-No. 5 Washington and then-No. 3 UCLA. She also gave up a walk-off home run to Pac-10 Player of the Week honoree Caitlin Benyi in Sunday's 10-inning loss to UCLA.

The junior transfer from Central Arizona College is 17-7 this season, and all six of Oregon's conference wins came

when Nyhus was in the circle.

Nyhus has 128 strikeouts on the season, making her No. 10 all-time for career strikeouts at Oregon.

The White Rock, British Columbia native earned her first Pitcher of the Week award two weeks ago when she gained wins against then-No. 3 California and then-No. 10 Stanford.

It is the first time since 1989 that an Oregon pitcher has earned the honor twice in one season.

The Ducks (32-11 overall, 6-3 Pac-10) moved up three spots in the newest ESPN/USA Softball poll released Tuesday. Oregon jumped from No. 15 to No. 12.

—Mindi Rice

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