

HURDLING

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showed interest.

After seeing Mitchum perform in the Illinois state high school meet his senior year, Duck coaches were convinced he had the talent to hurdle at the Division I level. So far, Mitchum's done nothing to prove Oregon wrong. Along with Sunday's record, the sophomore ran a wind-aided 13.50 at the Texas Relays earlier this month, which is the second-fastest time in the country behind Florida's Josh Walker (13.47).

Off the track, Mitchum's transition to small-town life in Eugene was easier than he expected. Friendships with Brandon Holliday, Roderick Dotts and Kedar Inico have helped the sophomore get over the lack of quality clubs, malls and parties in Tracktown, USA.

Mitchum also grew close with fellow sprinter Travis Anderson. The two have lived together since arriving at Oregon and never fail to have a good time.

"We roughhouse a lot," Anderson said. "I don't know why, but we do."

The usual result?

"Eric always wins," Anderson said. "He just squeezes me to death."

Most of Mitchum's time, however, is spent trying to get faster and stronger.

This weekend's Oregon Invitational will present one of many chances the sophomore will have to entertain fans at Hayward Field during his time left in Eugene.

"Over the next two years, we'll be able to improve his technique," Steele said. "There's very little that separates Eric from the great hurdlers."

Contact the sports reporter at jonroetman@dailyemerald.com.

CLUB

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Island High School. The winner will be named the league champion and will automatically get a berth in the National Tournament held May 12 through 15 in St. Louis.

Nine conference divisions will each send a conference champion and seven at-large bids are filled by a committee.

Oregon lacrosse Coordinator Jon Opet said there are "eight schools that constantly fight for the National Championship." This year, the Ducks are in position to compete against those top teams and earn a place among them.

With a 12-6 overall record and No. 9 national ranking, the Ducks have seen a transformation in the level of their play. Oregon's losses have all come from ranked opponents, and it is those games that have pushed the Ducks to become better.

The Ducks began to pick up their level of play and became determined to perform like a nationally-ranked team by the middle of the spring season, Opet said.

"Our offense began to value ball possession more, and on defense we really stepped up our level of play," Opet said.

Oregon saw Waldman score his 100th career goal on Saturday, which was the first time any player has ever

reached the mark in the school's lacrosse history. The Ducks also found a reason to celebrate when Dave Wyer scored his first career goal. Wyer's first goal was a tribute to his younger brother, whom Wyer would not discuss but said had passed away "a couple of years ago."

Wyer attributes the team's success this year to their performance both on and off the field.

Wyer said the 40 members of the lacrosse team now serve as his "little brothers" and that the team is "a closely knit bunch who have logged thousands of miles together all up and down the West Coast."

The Ducks have traveled as far north as Canada and as far south as San Diego. The missing piece to the puzzle, they say, is the trip east, to St. Louis.

"It would be huge for us to compete in St. Louis," Waldman said. "It would be the first time in school history, and we would prove to the league that we are for real this year."

Before the conference tournament, Oregon wants to make sure it is ready to play and perform when it counts.

"We've definitely been working on harnessing all of our talent and pointing it in the same direction," Waldman said.

Kirsten McEwen is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

SPORTS BRIEF

Duck men, women head to Pac-10 Tournament

Oregon's Daria Panova will try to continue her dominance over the Pacific-10 Conference as she and the rest of the Oregon tennis teams compete in the Pacific-10 Men's and Women's Individual Tennis Championships starting today in Ojai, Calif.

Panova, ranked 10th in the nation, will be going for her fourth Pac-10 individual title. The junior from Moscow won the 2003 and 2004 indoor Pac-10 championships, along with last year's outdoor championship.

"Daria has that expectation on herself to win anytime she is in a tournament," Oregon head coach Nils Schyllander said.

Panova will face 99th-ranked Joslynn Burkett of Arizona State today. Panova beat Burkett earlier this season in three sets, 3-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Other competitors in the singles

tournament for Oregon will be 69th-ranked Dominika Dieskova and senior Courtney Nagle.

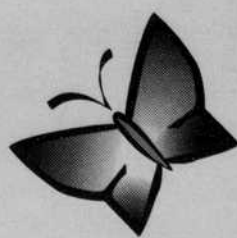
On the men's side, Oregon junior Sven Swinnen has moved up 18 spots in the rankings to No. 17, the highest an Oregon men's player has been ranked in the program's 66-year history.

Swinnen, along with No. 71 Manuel Kost, Thomas Bieri and Markus Schiller, will participate this weekend.

"Swinnen and Manuel have beaten top-ranked people this year, so I think they have a good chance to go far," head coach Chris Russell said. "Thomas and Markus play a big style of tennis and if they're on, they can beat anyone."

In today's first-round action, Swinnen will face Arizona's Colin O'Grady. Kost will match-up against Arizona's Whi Kim, Bieri will take on No. 79 Jasmil Al-Agba of Southern California and Schiller will play against 11th-ranked Sam Warburg of Stanford.

— Clayton Jones



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