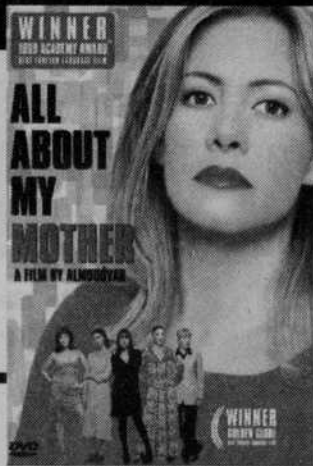
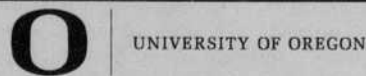


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WONDER

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fourth in a 400-meter race which included the top junior athletes from all over Europe.

"I was caught in the finish line, and after that I started getting serious about it," Abildtrup said.

Three years later, she decided to take a year off from running to concentrate on her studies. Abildtrup questioned whether she would ever return to the track, but the hunger resurfaced. She resumed her training and found it to be a difficult process.

"It was somehow kind of hard to run the times when I was 16 again," Abildtrup said. "But on the other hand, I knew I would be able to get back." In the fall of last year, Abildtrup arrived to Eugene to spend time with her boyfriend, former Oregon pole-vaulter Piotr Buciarski. She presented the coaches with her times, and the next thing she knew, she had a scholarship waiting for her.

Abildtrup now ranks among the



Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

Sofie Abildtrup plans on moving back home to Denmark after the end of the track season.

best sprinters in Oregon history. Her time of 54.49 seconds in the 400 at the Pepsi Invite moved her into ninth all-time. This past Sunday, Abildtrup ran the 200 in 23.93 seconds at the Mt. SAC Relays to place her seventh all-time. Abildtrup was also named Pacific-10 Conference Women's Track Athlete of the Week one week ago.

Her impact is being felt throughout the whole team.

"It was very uplifting knowing that we could compete in the Pac-10 with her, and that one person can make a difference," Donovan said.

First-year women's sprints coach Rock Light also acknowledges Abildtrup's effect on the team this year. Light said he is impressed with the way she has handled herself as an athlete and as a person.

"She's had a huge impact on the team," Light said. "Her ability, her leadership — she motivates the entire team. She's as pleasant and grounded an athlete that I've ever coached in my life and that I've coached at her age."

The positive feelings between the two are mutual, as Abildtrup credits her individual coach as a huge inspiration. Both also have had to adjust to their first full season at Oregon.

"He has a mentality that makes us feel that we can really get much better," Abildtrup said. "He really believes in us and I think that's really important."

But the chances to see Abildtrup

compete at Oregon are dwindling as each day passes. Her plan after this year is to return home to Denmark, where she wants to continue studying architecture.

"I decided to take a year off because I wanted to focus a bit more on track and I felt like traveling a bit," Abildtrup said. "Everything worked and I had the ability to come here."

"The thing is, if I want to go back and continue school in Copenhagen, I can't really take more than a year off. So that's the main reason for going back," she said.

With the Pac-10 Championships coming up in three weeks and the school year winding down, Abildtrup will reflect on her Oregon track experience with positive feelings.

"The students here are really into sports and they feel like they're a part of the team and I think that's great," Abildtrup said.

While she will always appreciate the opportunity to compete at legendary Hayward Field, her desire to become an architect is what drives her.

"Track is something that's a part of your life for a short period, and you have to take advantage of it when you have the ability to do it," Abildtrup said. "But at the same time, my education is what's going to affect my life in the future and I've always focused my time on doing good in school."

Contact the sports reporter at alexam@dailyemerald.com.

REMATCH

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hurdles that day may be all the motivation Holliday needs when he competes in the event Saturday at the Oregon Invitational.

"I'll definitely store it and think about it when I'm getting ready to run another race," Holliday said. "I definitely don't want to lose again, so I'll probably be going over that in my mind."

Along with Holliday, other Oregon athletes who will compete Saturday include 2003 Pac-10 javelin champion Adam Jenkins, Tommy Skipper (pole vault), Leonidas Watson (long jump, triple jump) and Mitchum (110 hurdles, 400 hurdles).

Thursday's results

The Oregon Invitational opened Thursday with heptathlon and decathlon competition.

Competing unattached, Oregon redshirt freshman Ben Looney ranked sixth with 3,404 points after five events in the men's decathlon. The Coos Bay native finished ninth in the 100 (11.46), eighth in the high jump (6 feet), eighth in the long jump (21-7 1/4) and 10th in the shot put (35-8 1/2). He completed the day with a "disappointing" time of 51.77 in the 400.

"I wanted to break 50 (seconds)," Looney said. "Times were slow today; it was frustrating."

Looney said he has enjoyed his competition time during his redshirt year, despite going up against some of the nation's best athletes. His experience included a chance to compete in the Oregon Preview during spring break.

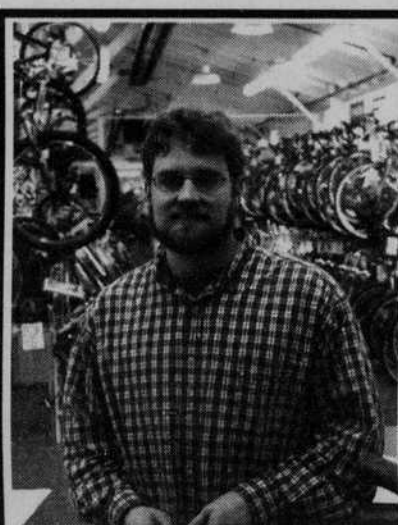
"Just to be practicing with (quality athletes) and wondering what it's like to be a Division I athlete (is motivating)," Looney said. "It was pretty good running the hurdles with Eric (Mitchum), A.K. (Ikwaakor) and (former Oregon athlete Santiago Lorenzo)."

On the women's side, senior Abby Andrus sat in fifth after Thursday's action (3,072).

Her first-day highlight was a second-place finish in the 100 hurdles (14.15). The Peoria, Ariz. native's first day total was 46 points off her personal best (3,108).

"It was a decent first day," Andrus said. "But the way I've been practicing I was hoping for more points, so it is still a little frustrating. My 100 hurdles was pretty good; I was a little close to the bar and a little fast in the high jump."

Contact the sports reporter at jonroetman@dailyemerald.com.



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