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Thursday, April 29, 2004



Mindi Rice

The girl and the game

Husky softball remains on swing

When Oregon and Washington met two weeks ago on the field at Husky Softball Stadium in Seattle something was different from last year's meeting in Eugene.

It wasn't just the confidence of Oregon. It wasn't just the Washington head coaches.

It was the entire Husky bench. They were happy — they smiled during the game and they were laughing in the dugout.

The Huskies were a dramatically different team than the one that came to Eugene for a Friday game one year ago. Now the team that has fun during games comes to town for two more at Howe Field this weekend.

Collegiate sports scandals have gotten more press in recent years. From Colorado to Georgia, Baylor to St. John's, these scandals have taken on every shape and size.

Washington, however, takes the cake.

As if the school didn't already have enough problems from former head football coach Rick Neuheisel, former head softball coach Teresa Wilson filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Seattle that alleges sex discrimination, violation of due process, breach of contract and wrongful discharge.

The suit was made public the day before the findings of an internal investigation regarding the misuse of medicine within the softball team were made public.

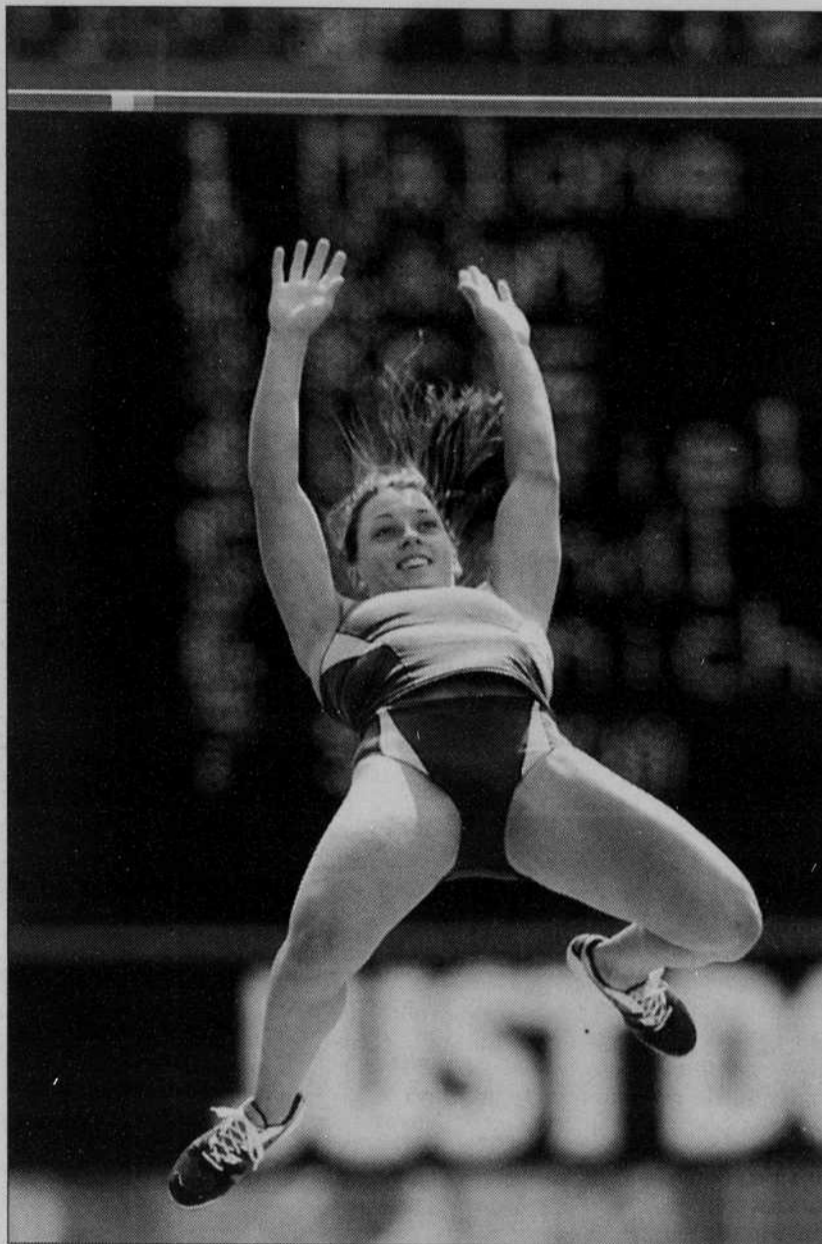
All of this, right in the midst of a softball season, could very well be what threw Washington off course over last week's Pacific-10 Conference loss was a 2-1 loss to Oregon until this weekend, lost three games — one to No. 5 California and two to No. 8 Stanford.

This season's success, while on-par with last season, is healthier. Stories came out in the investigation ranging from players "swimming" on the dugout floor, to one player who did not remember falling off the bus and into Wilson's arms.

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Jumping a different bar

Kirsten Larwin had aspirations to become a gymnast before her path led to Oregon track

By Alex Tam
Sports Reporter

Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

Senior Kirsten Larwin is Oregon's top returning pole vaulter this season.

Kirsten Larwin once had no hope whatsoever of becoming a track and field athlete.

The 22-year-old Eugene native didn't even expect to attend Oregon. As a teenager, she had big plans of attending Oregon State.

"I always wanted to go to Oregon State because they have a gymnastics team," Larwin said. "It was kind of my dream as a little girl."

However, a back injury sidelined Larwin during her sophomore year in high school. After 13 years of aspiring to become a gymnast, she realized the two stress fractures in her back would force her to relinquish her dream.

"That was pretty hard," said Larwin, a senior majoring in French. "It's not like I quit because I didn't love it anymore. I had so many high goals for myself that I was devastated. Then I got really lucky and got another chance."

The chance came from South Eugene High School track coach John Gillespie, who was aware of Larwin's gymnastics experience. Gillespie encouraged her to give the pole vault a try, which he hoped was an easy transition for her.

Her attitude at first was not optimistic. She felt she wouldn't succeed after starting a new sport so late.

"Being 15, even though I knew I wasn't old, I just felt old to find another sport because everybody starts when they're very young," Larwin said.

Gillespie's hope was fulfilled, and Larwin capped her prep career by finishing fourth at the Oregon 4A state meet when she cleared 10 feet, 8 inches. She ranked seventh in the state as a senior. With some convincing from her mother and a talk with former Oregon women's head coach Tom Heinonen, she had her sights set on Oregon to continue her pole vault career.

This year, she returns as Oregon's top pole vaulter and has already qualified for the Pacific-10 Conference Championships in May. Larwin will be one of several Oregon women competing at the Oregon Twilight meet at Hayward Field on Saturday.

The determination to succeed in gymnastics at a young age carried over to the pole vault. Her coaches and teammates agree that her desire to be the best is what sets her apart.

"She's our leader and she leads by example," women's pole vault coach Mark Vanderville said. "She's really motivated to achieve her goals, and she's really driven."

That drive has also been passed to her teammates. Fellow pole

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Oregon ends time at Pac-10s in 7th

Justin St. Clair led Oregon's contingent by tying for 14th; the Ducks' regional hopes are now on thin ice

By Brian Smith
Freelance Reporter

Members of the Oregon men's golf team found themselves being blown around the course Wednesday.

But not by the competition — by the wind.

Thunderstorms and gusty winds around the par-72, 7,435-yard Gallery at Dove Mountain course drove up final round scores for all teams but one at the 2004 Pacific-10 Championships.

"We played pretty darn good considering how the conditions changed during the round," Washington head coach Matt Thurmond said. "It was an advantage to the teams that went out first and did not have many holes

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The QB behind the QB

Johnny DuRocher is set to serve as Oregon's backup quarterback, an important piece of the Ducks' offensive puzzle

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

Johnny DuRocher doesn't regret it one bit. He doesn't mind that he missed his last few months at Bethel High School in Washington — at least he attended his senior prom.

If he had to do it again, he wouldn't change a thing.

Well, maybe.

"If I had to do it all over again, I might have come in the winter instead of the spring," the redshirt freshman said.

DuRocher left the high school life behind for the Ducks last spring. Instead of waking up early for classes, he woke up to study plays. The parties so prevalent in high school were now hosted by Oregon coaches — in the film room.

He became part of a recent trend in college

football of high school players who leave during their senior year to enroll in collegiate programs.

DuRocher got a jump on the rest of the competition, earning him a chance to be the team's No. 2 quarterback.

And the consensus is that he's in the lead for that spot.

"I think Johnny's definitely got the advantage because he's been here, and so much of playing quarterback is mental work you've got to get through," Oregon quarterback Kellen Clemens said. "It's going to be a battle. It's going to be fun to watch all the way through summer and in the fall."

If the backup situation seems eerily familiar to last season, it might just be. Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti hesitated to name a definitive No. 1 at the position, opting instead to go with a platoon of

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Johnny DuRocher (left) is expected to be Oregon's backup quarterback when the 2004 season begins.
Adam Amato
Photographer