Oregon Daily Emerald

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SPORTS

Best bet
MLB:
Atlanta vs. Colorado
12:05 p.m. Saturday, TBS

Friday, April 30, 2004

HUMBLE VAULTER

Tommy Skipper is well-liked by his Oregon teammates because of his selfless attitude

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

He is one of the most talented track and field athletes in the country.

He's celebrity-handsome and has become a Hayward Field icon during his freshman year at Oregon.

For those who have never met Tommy Skipper, it would be easy to suspect the 19 year old of being self-absorbed.

It takes only one conversation with the Sandy native, however, to realize he's one of the most modest people one could encounter.

"I was a little shocked by how humble he was," senior pole vaulter Trevor Woods said. "I tried not to have any preconceived notions when he first got here, but the word that people around Oregon used (to describe Skipper) was 'wow.' I wouldn't say they considered him to be God-like, but almost like a mythical creature. But the moment he showed up, you could just tell that he was genuine. There's no fakeness to him."

A combination of strong family values and a desire to honor his late brother Art has lead Tommy Skipper on a path to Oregon, where he has quickly become one of the school's most well-liked athletes. That path, however, wasn't always clear.

Skipper's choice to become a Duck wasn't an easy one at first. Coming out of Sandy High School, the 2003 Track and Field News' Boy's Athlete of the Year had the talent to pole vault for any school in the nation. After a lengthy decision making process, Skipper decided Tracktown, USA, was the place for him. It was close to home and his brothers, Scott and Art, had also been Ducks.

"Looking back at it, I say 'wow,' it shouldn't have been that tough for me to see that Oregon was the place for me," Skipper said. "There was so much confusion coming out of high school with me wanting to make the perfect decision and not wanting to have any regrets on going to the wrong university. Now that I'm here, I love the University of Oregon and there wouldn't be any other place for me."

After arriving at Oregon during winter term, it didn't take long for Skipper to amaze his teammates on and off the field.

At an indoor meet in Nampa, Idaho, in early February, Skipper broke the school pole vault record when he cleared the bar at 18 feet, 8 3/4 inches. The previous record, held by Olympian Kory Tarpenning (18-6 1/2), had stood for 19 years.

Skipper's performance during the indoor campaign earned him All-American status and gave Oregon coaches an idea of what he's capable of accomplishing during his collegiate career.

Once the outdoor season started, Skipper's success continued. Though he hasn't come close to his record-breaking height, he recorded first-place marks at the Oregon Preview (17-6 1/2) and the Pepsi Team Invitational (17-5), along with a fourth-place finish at the Texas Relays (17-8 1/2).

What impressed Skipper's teammates even more than his athletic talent was the way he has handled success.

"He's a great guy," redshirt freshman pole vaulter David Moore said. "You would expect someone with that much talent to be a little more cocky, a little more arrogant, think he knows everything and think he's better than everyone else. But he doesn't have that attitude. He's totally down to earth and realizes he has great talent, but doesn't think he's

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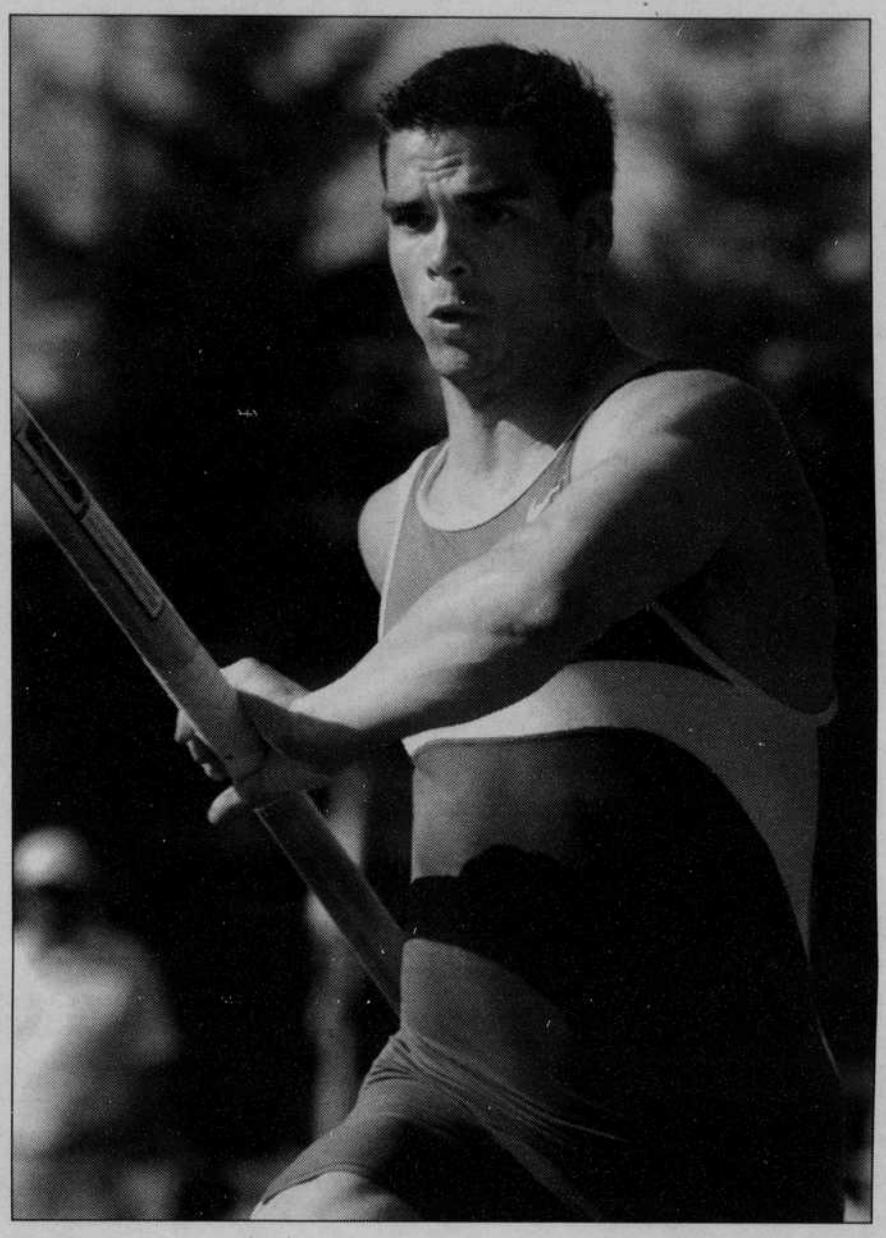
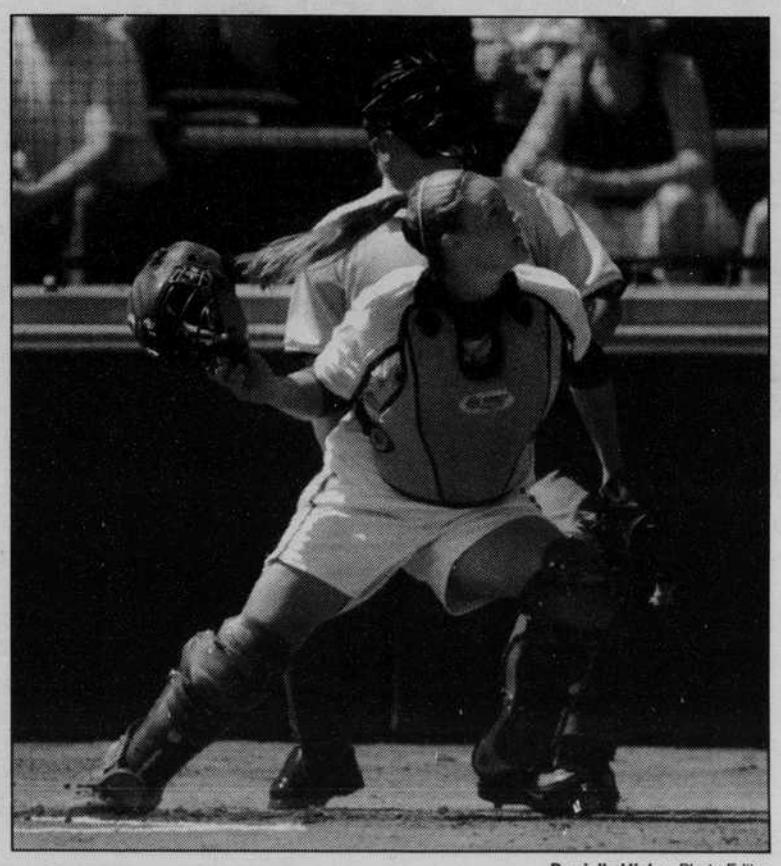


Tommy Skipper broke the Oregon pole vault record when he cleared 18 feet, 8 3/4 inches at an indoor meet in Nampa, Idaho, in early February.

Lauren Wimer
Senior Photographer

MITT MAVEN

Jenn Poore leads the Ducks behind the plate, in hitting and as a senior, but she is best known for her funny personality



Danielle Hickey Photo Editor

Catcher Jenn Poore calls most games herself after going over game plans with the Oregon coaching staff for each player on the opposing team.

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

Jenn Poore is not a stereotypical leadoff hitter.

Tied with Ashley Richards to lead the Ducks with a .324 batting average, Poore started the season batting in the cleanup spot. The coaches eventually moved the senior to the top of the order because of "her experience and ability to adjust to any situation," according to head coach Kathy Arendsen.

Poore is three for five in stolen base attempts this season but leads Oregon with a .437 on-base percentage.

"We're not looking at blazing speed," Arendsen said. "Although she likes to try and convince me of that."

Instead, the coaches are looking at Poore's ease of adjusting to different pitchers and teams. Her skills make her invaluable to the Ducks, who continue Pacific-10 Conference play today with a 2 p.m. game against UCLA. Oregon also hosts Washington at 3 p.m. Saturday and 1 p.m. Sunday.

Poore learned to adapt to new surroundings and experiences at a young age.

Born in Rhode Island, Poore's parents moved Poore and her younger sister to Italy when they were young. Her brother was born in Italy before the family moved again, this time to Virginia. The military-related moving eventually landed the family in San Diego.

A self-described military brat, Poore picked up and moved to Mississippi for her freshman year of college after taking just two recruiting trips — to Ole

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Lack of depth plagues Ducks during spring

Oregon players will participate in a nontraditional spring game Saturday, much like last season's

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

As much as Oregon would love to hold a traditional spring game, it knows it has other concerns to address.

DUCK FOOTBALL

Health, for one, has become a pressing issue for the Ducks during the spring. Therefore, Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said the spring game, set to be held Saturday at 12:30 p.m. at Autzen Stadium, will be formatted much like a scrimmage.

"That means due to a lack of depth on the offensive and defensive lines we don't have enough to do really two teams," Bellotti said. "So we'll do offense against defense and we'll set up some situations to simulate as much as possible game experience for everybody."

Coaches were forced to improvise last season, as well, when Bellotti broke the team down and awarded points in "creative" ways. That can include solo tackles and interceptions for the defense and, on offense, runs or passes of 10 or more yards and so on.

"It's much the same as last year," Bellotti said. "Maybe an improved version of last year."

The Ducks will not be the first team from the Pacific-10 Conference to go the way of the scrimmage. Most notably, California, which also has had health issues, decided to go even further away from the spring game.

The Golden Bears participated in drills for 90 minutes, then went

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