

Tuesday, May 11, 2004



Hank Hager
Behind the dish

Baseball creates its own web with ads

So it seemed for a little while there that the webbed wonder was going to get his own spotlight at 15 Major League Baseball stadiums from June 11 through June 13.

Spider-Man and baseball?

Now, like peanut butter and jelly. Chunks and all.

Should we all have been terribly surprised?

No.

Should baseball purists be both quietly and verbally upset at the notion of an advertisement on the on-deck circle or the bases?

Absolutely.

Is this an ingenious idea for marketing executives in a time when the sports world has become a big business and, in effect, money is the bottom line?

No further questions needed.

The skinny of it is:

"They're always looking for new ways to create incremental revenue streams for the league," said Paul Swangard, director of Oregon's Warsaw Sports Marketing Center. "I think it's a pretty creative approach. You can say what you want about traditional baseball values and not protecting the sanctity of the game.

"But let's be obvious. The only reason people are willing to pay the kind of money for the teams to put this on their bases is because there's all these people watching they want to reach with their advertising."

In effect, and Swangard alluded to this later, is that somebody was bound to eventually try an advertising scenario like this. In past seasons, the American and National leagues have placed World Series and Major League Baseball All-Star logos on the bases and on-deck circles.

But the catch is that those were for the betterment of the game. Those logos were internal advertising, a way to promote what was happening on the field, not in the theaters.

Spider-Man and promotion of the superhero's second movie is a whole other realm. It's a realm the game won't get into just yet — giving up an estimated \$3.6 million that Columbia Pictures and Marvel Studios would have paid to promote the movie.

That, in itself, is a dangerous precedent. As much as everyone outside baseball seems to be happy that the advertising won't happen, there's nothing to say baseball officials won't try it again next year. The thought has seeped into the minds of commissioner Bud Selig and Co.

That's dangerous.

Sometime, probably soon, the thought will stick.

Maybe even for good.

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Lack of training doesn't stop Skipper

Tommy Skipper surprises himself by winning the Pac-10 title with little or no training in many events; he'll compete in the pole vault Saturday

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

The idea of entering a decathlon had crossed Tommy Skipper's mind once or twice.

Competing for the Pacific-10 Conference decathlon title with little or no training in many of the events, however, was never part of the freshman's thought process.

Despite being one of the most talented track and field athletes in the country, Skipper entered Friday's competition with no idea how he'd fare against decathletes who had been training all year. The Sandy native would have to rely on raw ability after focusing primarily on the pole vault throughout the season.

MEN'S TRACK

"In the last couple of years I've been thinking about opening in a decathlon," Skipper said. "I touched on a few of the events in high school. I threw the javelin and the disc in some of the events (at Hayward

Field) but I never expected to open up without any training or prep work."

Turns out Skipper's athletic ability was more than enough as the freshman bettered the nearest competitor by 105 points on the way to being named Pac-10 champion. For his efforts, Skipper was also named Pac-10 Men's Athlete of the Week on Monday.

Along with the freshman's overall success came several surprising performances, most notably in the speed events. Skipper had the fastest time in the 100-meter dash (10.69 seconds) and third best time in the 400 (50.26) among the nine decathlete finishers.

"I didn't know I'd run the 100 that fast," Skipper said. "I haven't been training for it at all. I haven't done any speed work. I also surprised myself in the 400."

But perhaps the biggest surprise of Skipper's decathlon was his performance in the 110-meter hurdles, when he finished fifth with a time of 15.44. Prior to the race, his only hurdles experience came during a decathlon he competed in during the eighth grade.

Skipper said he was nervous before the 110 hurdles — the first event of the second day — because he didn't want to fall behind in the standings.

"I knew that could break my back if I didn't do well," Skipper said. "Especially the morning (of the second day), when you wake up and you can hardly get out of bed, you're like, 'holy smokes.' That was my first thought when I woke up: 'I have to get up and run five more events.'"

Skipper said a combination of encouragement from decathlon coach Bill Lawson, his teammates and physical therapy from the training staff helped him win the conference title.

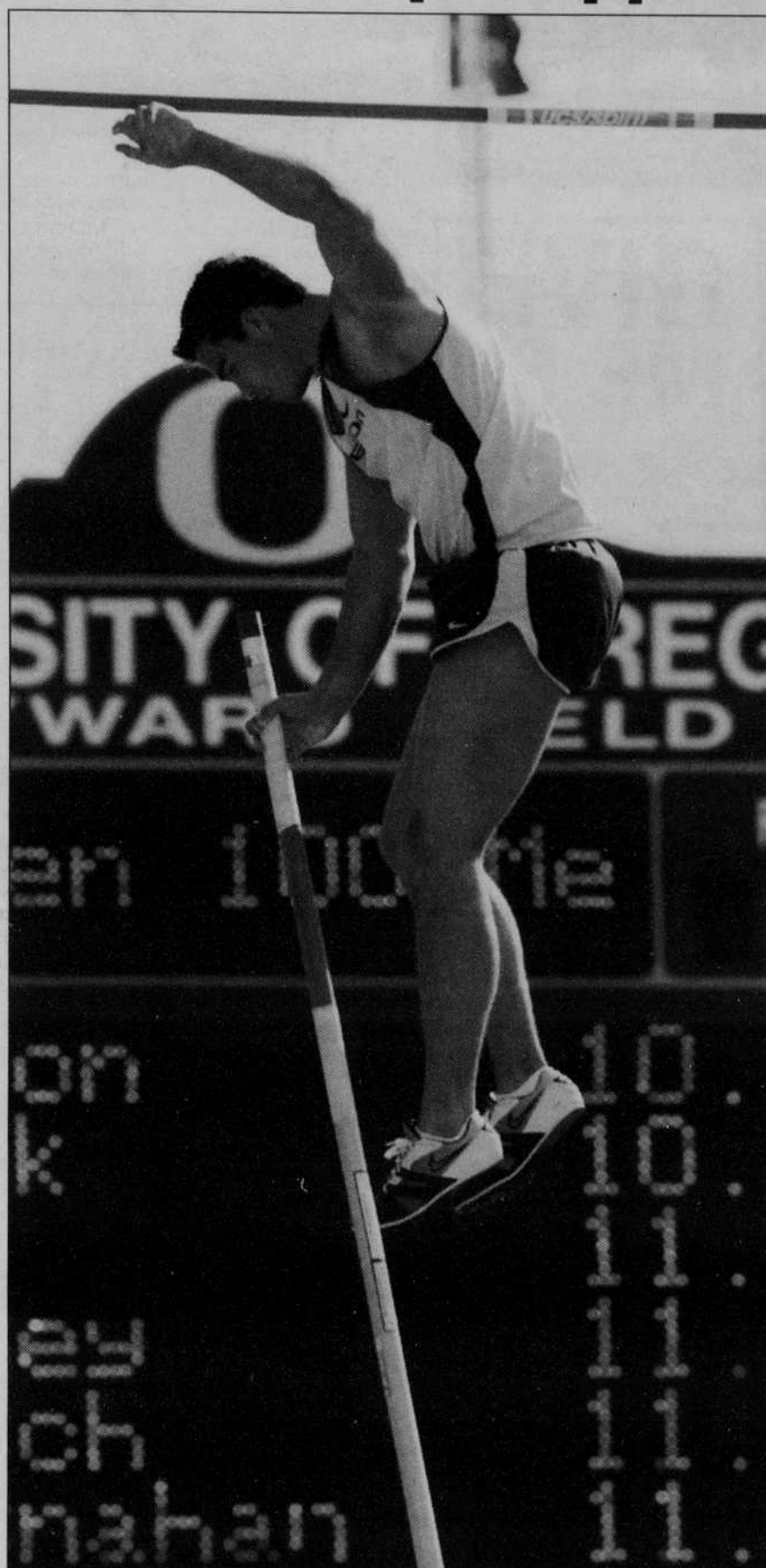
"I can't say enough good things about those guys," Skipper said. "They got me through it. It was kind of a team effort to get everyone through it."

Looking ahead

With Pac-10s coming up this weekend, several Oregon athletes rank at the top of the conference in their respective events.

The Ducks feature four event leaders, including redshirt junior Brett Holts in the 3,000 steeplechase (8:44.57), sophomore Eric Mitchum in the 110 hurdles (13.50), senior Brandon Holliday in the 400 hurdles (51.08) and Skipper

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Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

Tommy Skipper earned Pac-10 Track and Field Athlete of the Week honors for winning the conference decathlon title. Skipper now will compete in the pole vault Saturday in Tucson.

UO Club triathlon sets sights on Lebanon

The Club team finishes fifth at one of its most high-profile events of the team's 2004 season

By Kirsten McEwen
Freelance Reporter

In a sport where team times are rarely emphasized, Oregon's Club triathlon team members had to count on one another to finish in the top five in the Wildflower Triathlon on May 1.

The Ducks traveled south to compete in the tournament on Lake San Antonio, located just outside of San Luis Obispo, Calif. Twenty-one triathletes represented Oregon in the SeaGate Collegiate Championships.

Oregon, competing in its first Olympic-distance

triathlon, finished in fifth place with an overall time of 16 hours, 50.10 minutes. Montana, with an overall time of 14:43.59, claimed first place ahead of California, Cal Poly and UC San Diego.

Club Sports

"Montana came out of nowhere and did really well," triathlon Team Coordinator Tana Bryn said. "No one expected them to do so well. Their snowy conditions make it hard for them to train, but obviously that didn't hold them back."

On the men's side, Jay Williams, Daniel Butler and David Matthews were Oregon's top finishers. Williams finished with a time of 2:36.24. His time, along with Butler's and

Matthews', was combined with Oregon's top three women's times to give Oregon a top-five finish at one of the team's most important races of the year.

Kristina Rand, Sarah Mollet and Alison Weber paced the Oregon women and each of their scores counted toward Oregon's team score.

"I was really impressed by everyone's scores, especially because we have so many new athletes," Mollet said. "It's a big physical challenge and just a great test for the body."

Each triathlete participated in a 1500-meter swim, a 40-kilometer bike ride and a 6.2-mile run.

"Everyone was really pleased with the race," Bryn said. "Everyone was really out there to help everyone else out."

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