

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Competitive chucker

Adam Jenkins is poised to make his first trip to the NCAA Championships in the javelin event

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

Four years ago around this time, Adam Jenkins felt unappreciated.

The Gladstone High School senior owned the top prep javelin mark in the country (229 feet, 2 inches) but wasn't getting any attention from college coaches.

"I was really surprised that I didn't get more calls," Jenkins said. "It was hard to understand how I was leading the nation and my coach had to call schools and say, 'Hey, I have a kid who can throw here.'"

It appeared Jenkins had fallen victim to being a late bloomer with the javelin, failing to reach the 200-foot mark until his senior year. While most college coaches start recruiting an athlete early in his or her prep career, Jenkins spent the first three years of high school just learning about the event after making a switch from baseball.

Frustrated and confused, Jenkins considered skipping college entirely and starting a career as an electrician. Before that decision became set in stone, however, Jenkins' performance at the Oregon 4A state high school meet caught the attention of Oregon assistant coach Bill Lawson.

Jenkins won the state title with a throw of 215-3 on his final attempt.

"That was four years ago and we were just starting to build a men's program and at that time I was looking at every possible athlete in every event, leaving no stone unturned," Lawson said. "Lo and behold, I found Adam. What really intrigued me was he won the state meet on his last throw. I said, 'Well, that kid's a competitor and I like that.'"

After opening up communication lines with the senior, Oregon watched Jenkins put on a quality performance in the Junior Olympics at Silke Field in Springfield. The Oregon coach knew Jenkins could be a valuable asset to the program.

"That's when I started talking to him about the value of getting a college degree and throwing for the University of Oregon," Lawson said. "I think it all sounded very, very appealing to him."

Jenkins made the decision to come to Oregon and four years later finds himself in position to qualify for his first ever trip to the NCAA Championships. The

senior finished second at last weekend's Pacific-10 Conference Championships, highlighted by a collegiate-best toss of 227-4. He will likely need a top-five finish at next weekend's NCAA West Regional Qualifier to earn a ticket to the Big Dance.

If any added motivation is needed, Jenkins need look no further than last season's regional qualifier. Despite winning the Pac-10 title and launching a personal best throw of 222-4 on his first attempt at the qualifier, Jenkins finished seventh and missed out on a chance of competing at the NCAAs.

"Last year sucked because I entered the meet ranked fourth and I finished seventh and only the top five got to go," Jenkins said. "I'm pretty confident (this year). My mission is to go out there and beat (Arizona's) Matt (Wagner), who beat me at Pac-10s. Cracking the top five is exactly what I want to do. If it's fifth place I get, that's fine. If it's first place I get, that's cool. I'm not really throwing for a distance at that meet, I just want to place. Then, nationals is where I want to let loose."

It's Jenkins competitiveness and desire to improve every day that has put him in this position. Whether it was his desire to achieve the nation's top prep mark or to out-throw former teammate John Stiegeler in practice, Jenkins has always had something to drive him.

Jenkins' hard work and competitiveness first paid off during his senior year of high school, when his personal best increased by more than 50 feet from the previous year.

Jenkins took that success with him to Oregon, where he built a healthy competitive friendship with Stiegeler. The Coos Bay native set a standard for Jenkins to follow, including an NCAA Championship and school record toss of 252-10 during the 2000-01 season.

With Stiegeler wrapping up his Oregon career last year, Jenkins has had to find a new way to motivate himself during practice. Being the only regular men's javelin thrower, he spends most of his time training with women's All-American Sarah Malone.

"At the beginning of the year, it was tough," Jenkins said. "It was really hard to train on my own. I was training with girls, but it's just different because I trained

Turn to **CHUCKER**, page 14



Adam Jenkins set a new personal best during last weekend's Pac-10s (227-4).
Danielle Hickey
Photo Editor

Ducks begin regional process today

Oregon begins the search for a Women's College World Series berth at 9:30 a.m. today in Tallahassee, Fla.

By Mindi Rice
Senior Sports Reporter

All season, the Ducks have talked about the NCAA Regional Tournament — when they will play, where they will play, who they will play, how they will play and why they will win.

That time has come, and as Oregon (38-19) answers some of its own questions — the Ducks' first game is at 9:30 a.m. today in Tallahassee, Fla., against seventh-seeded Bethune-Cookman, starters — the No. 2-seeded Ducks have to search for answers to the remaining queries.

"All year long, we've waited to go to regionals," pitcher Amy Harris said.



Tim Bobosky Photographer

Third baseman Ashley Richards and the Ducks finished the season 1-5, but they are hoping to turn that around in NCAA Regional play.

"We're putting everything we've learned in one season into this one week and playing as hard as we can."

After a successful early half of the season, including a 14-game win streak in preseason play and a 7-3 start to Pacific-10 Conference play, the Ducks finished the season with a 3-8 record in the final three weeks of conference play.

"Everything we've done this season, it doesn't mean anything," Oregon head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "Seeding the tournament is established, we're in. It's 0-0 for everybody. All 64 teams have the equal opportunity to win this thing. Everything else is in the past, I'm not worried about anything that happened last week."

Oregon, as a team, is focused on making a clean start. The team spent Tuesday traveling to Tallahassee and Wednesday was for adjusting to the weather and the park with a full practice before the tournament begins.

"All we have to worry about is playing the best that we can when we get there," third baseman Ashley Richards. "We're so far from home that there's no distractions, so it's all softball there. We're going to be focused and we're going to be playing to win."

In 2003, the Ducks made a noticeably shorter trip for the regional tournament, staying in the same time zone for a trip to Fullerton, Calif., as a No. 3 seed. Many family members and friends made the trip to support Oregon.

Tallahassee is a bit further than Fullerton, and while the Ducks could have gone closer to home, with Lincoln, Neb., Waco, Texas, or Ann Arbor, Mich., as other options. But there are positives to a trip across the country.

"We're so far away ... we're going all that way, so we've got to win," Richards said. "There's nothing else. If you're going to go all the way across the country, why not win?"

To get those wins, there is little room for error in regional games. In the double-elimination format that the NCAA has adopted, teams can bounce back from a loss, but they must do it quickly.

Last year, Oregon proved that an early loss isn't the end of the world. In Fullerton, the Ducks lost to Oklahoma State, 2-1, in the second round. The players weren't ready for their season to end, however, as Oregon stayed alive with a win against San Diego State later that day.

Turn to **REGIONAL**, page 14

Arizona weather an obstacle for Harmon

Laura Harmon battles the Arizona heat to add points to Oregon's 7th place finish

By Alex Tam
Sports Reporter

Laura Harmon expected the extremely hot weather in Tucson, Ariz., to have an impact on her 5,000-meter event at last weekend's Pacific-10 Conference Championships.

Harmon, a junior from Vancouver, Wash., placed eighth in the race with a time of 17 minutes, 21.57 seconds. Only two seconds separated her from the sixth place finisher, Arizona State's Desiree Davila. A contingent from Stan-

ford finished in the top three led by Sara Bei, who clocked in at

16.35.39.

As temperatures soared to nearly 100 degrees, Harmon said it was tough to run in an environment so different than Eugene.

"It's hard to race out of your element,"

Turn to **WEATHER**, page 16

WOMEN'S TRACK