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Best bet
NHL: Stanley Cup Finals
Calgary vs. Tampa Bay
5 p.m., ESPN

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Oregon hurdler quietly gets job done

A.K. Ikwuakor has spent most of his first season at Oregon succeeding under the radar

By Jon Roetman
Sports Reporter

A.K. Ikwuakor is having one of the more successful seasons of any Oregon men's track and field athlete.

It's just that nobody outside of the program knows about it. The sophomore transfer from Colorado specializes in the 110 and 400 meter hurdles, scoring points for Oregon in both during the Pacific-10 Conference Championships 10 days ago. His accomplishments, however, have gone mostly unnoticed as the Ducks feature two of the conferences best hurdlers.

While Ikwuakor placed third at Pac-10s in the 110-hurdles with his second fastest wind legal time of the season (14.26 seconds), most of the recognition went to teammate Eric Mitchum, who won the event with a time of 13.62.

While Ikwuakor scored a point for the Ducks by finishing eighth in the 400 hurdles (54.46), the attention went to teammate Brandon Holliday, who finished fourth with a personal best time of 50.52.

MEN'S TRACK

"I've taken a lot of second places behind those guys, but I consider myself lucky to compete against some of the best in the country," Ikwuakor said. "I just went to Pac-10s looking to score some points. I didn't want to be in the spotlight or anything, I just wanted to

get the job done."

Ikwuakor's contributions to the team don't go unnoticed by his teammates.

"He's the silent hero of this team," Mitchum said of Ikwuakor. "He doesn't get the publicity that Brandon and I get, but he's always here doing his job."

While Ikwuakor hasn't experienced the success of Mitchum or Holliday, Oregon sprints coach Dan Steele said all the 6-foot-4 speedster needs to do to run similar times is improve on his technique.

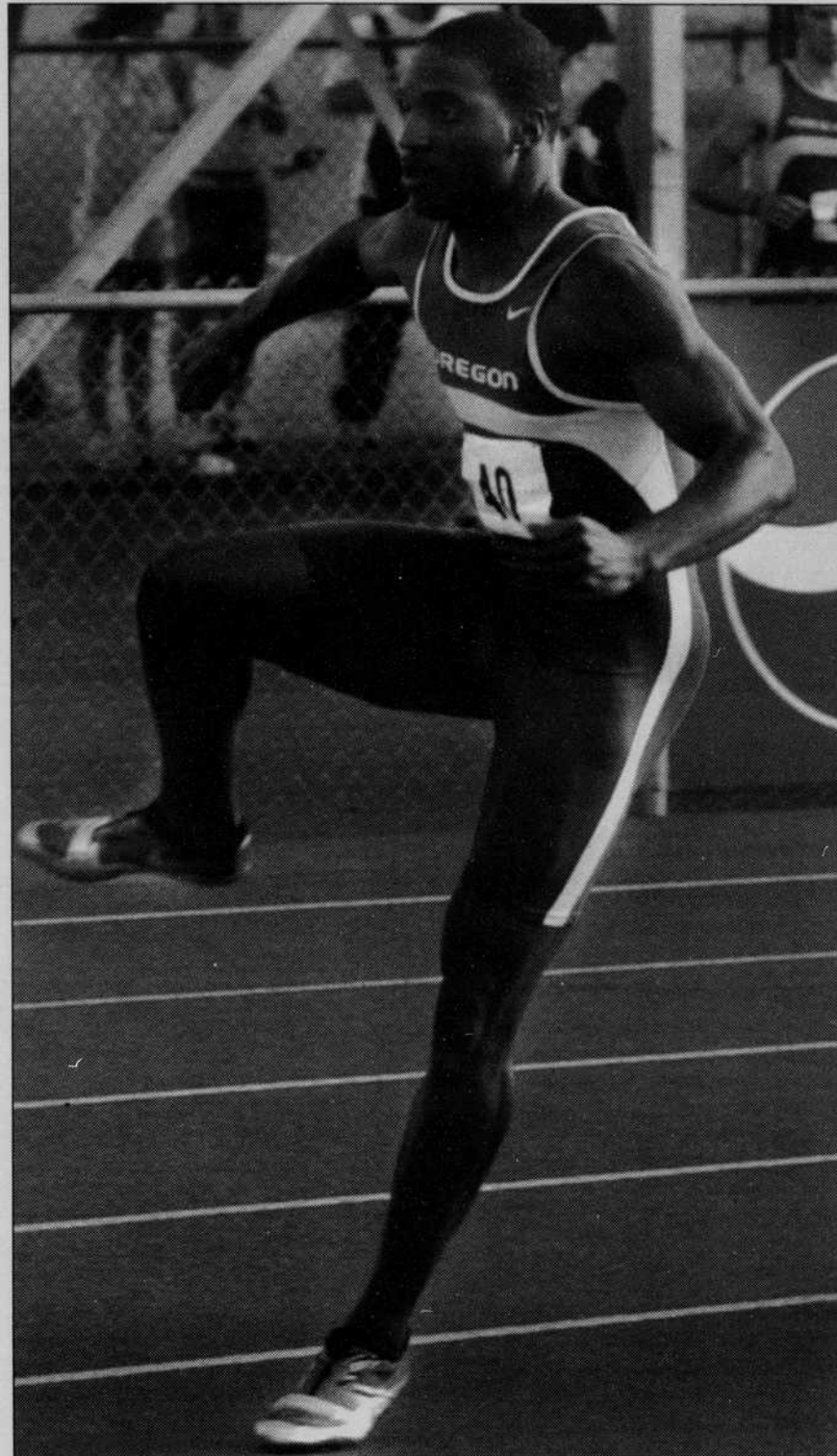
"A.K. believes he can beat those guys," Steele said. "But technically, he's not good. He has a long way to go, but he does have the ability to do some phenomenal things on the track to keep him in races.

"When he gets his timing down, he can rip through those hurdles faster than anyone on the team. The problem is, when his timing isn't there, he tends to get off balance and lose his rhythm."

Ikwuakor will focus solely on the 110 hurdles for the NCAA West Regional Qualifier this weekend. He will enter the event as the fifth seed, and if he can hold his ground, he will make a trip to the NCAAs.

While he hasn't bettered the times he set during his freshman season at Colorado (14.10 in the 110 hurdles, 51.99 in the 400 hurdles), he said qualifying for nationals would make the season a successful one.

"I'm going to say my season was average or great," Ikwuakor said. "I might not have hit my times from last season, but I'm



Lauren Wimer Senior photographer

A.K. Ikwuakor, seen earlier this year, scored points in two events for Oregon at the Pac-10s.

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Hank Hager
Behind the dish

Williams comes full circle at Oregon

She epitomized the Jody Runge era at Oregon.

Fiery, hard-working, not afraid to say what was on her mind, Shaquala Williams was an integral part of Oregon lore during an eight-year NCAA Tournament run.

Williams was talented. Maybe arguably the best player to come to the Ducks in the last decade.

There was something about her that suggested Pacific-10 Conference Freshman of the Year. Or Pac-10 Player of the Year.

How about Associated Press Honorable Mention All-American? Does that sound good?

With Williams, it did. Whether that came during her freshman, sophomore or junior seasons. And all three did, in that order.

That was then, almost a distant memory for an Oregon team that has missed the postseason for two straight seasons.

And this is Williams now, a veteran of the WNBA but one that is ready to pack it all in for something different, something outside the realm of athletics.

Try Shaquala Williams, Oregon law student.

It fits.

And it will have an expected three-year ring to it when she steps onto campus as a first-year law student in August.

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Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

Daria Panova, seen here earlier this season, lost in the first round of the NCAA Individual Championships on Monday. It came after she helped lead the Ducks to the NCAA team tournament.

Panova, Dieskova downed early in NCAA Individuals

The two losses force the Ducks out of the NCAA Individuals on the first day in Athens, Ga.

By Clayton Jones
Freelance Reporter

Daria Panova's quest for an NCAA Individual Tennis Championship was cut short Monday when Middle Tennessee State's Manon Kruse upset her, 3-6, 6-4, 6-1, in the first round of the NCAA Individual Championships in Athens, Ga.

Panova, the 12th-ranked player in the nation, started to falter in the second set after the score was tied at four. The 41st-ranked Kruse took control after that, losing only one game the rest of the match.

"I had a chance in the second set when it was tied at four, but I didn't serve well the rest of the match," Panova said.

Panova and Kruse had to wait for the match to start because an



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