

REGIONAL

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well.

"The implementation of regionals also allows athletes who might not have qualified for nationals otherwise, to get one more competitive meet."

Last season's regional qualifiers brought mixed reviews from coaches and athletes, with the biggest gripe usually being the timing of the meet.

"I don't like the regional system at all," Oregon throws coach Lance Deal said. "It's hard on the athletes. When Pac-10s, regionals and nationals are all two weeks apart from each other, it's hard to peak and maintain a high level of performance."

UCLA men's track and field head coach Art Venegas said he is also concerned about the health of his athletes.

"We were opposed to the regional, but once it passed we wholeheartedly have to support it," said Venegas, considered one of the top throws coaches in the country. "It's important that we do as well as we can, but we have to be careful of using the athletes properly in terms of nationals. We'll have several athletes not doubling or trying to get as many points as they can because they need to be ready for (NCAAs)."

Another timing issue that athletes have with the regional system is the disruption of their class schedules. The NCAA meet, which was held in late May in 2002, now falls during finals week for Oregon students after being forced back due to regionals. Athletes from Texas, on the other hand, who have been done with class since mid-May, are forced to wait around for the national championship meet to arrive.

"I find it to be a little bit annoying because it draws the season out a little bit longer," Oregon women's javelin thrower Sarah Malone said. "My biggest peeve is that now nationals fall on finals week. Trying to get things worked out with your teachers is difficult."

Malone enters the weekend ranked third in the nation (179 feet, 7 inches) and second in the West.

Not all feedback has been negative. Oregon pole vaulter Tommy Skipper said he enjoys every chance he gets to step onto the runway and compete. The freshman has worked



Mark Bockelman
Assistant director
of championships
NCAA

hard lately, winning the Pacific-10 Conference decathlon and pole vault championships, but is still in favor of having the extra meet to improve his technique.

"I think it's awesome," Skipper said. "We just got out of Pac-10s and there's a lot of people fired up to come back and show they can do better. A lot of people are hungry for that next meet because they didn't do as well as they would have liked to. That's where I stand personally; I'm hungry to jump again. I take a week off and that's too long. For me, the meet, a couple of weeks later, works out perfectly."

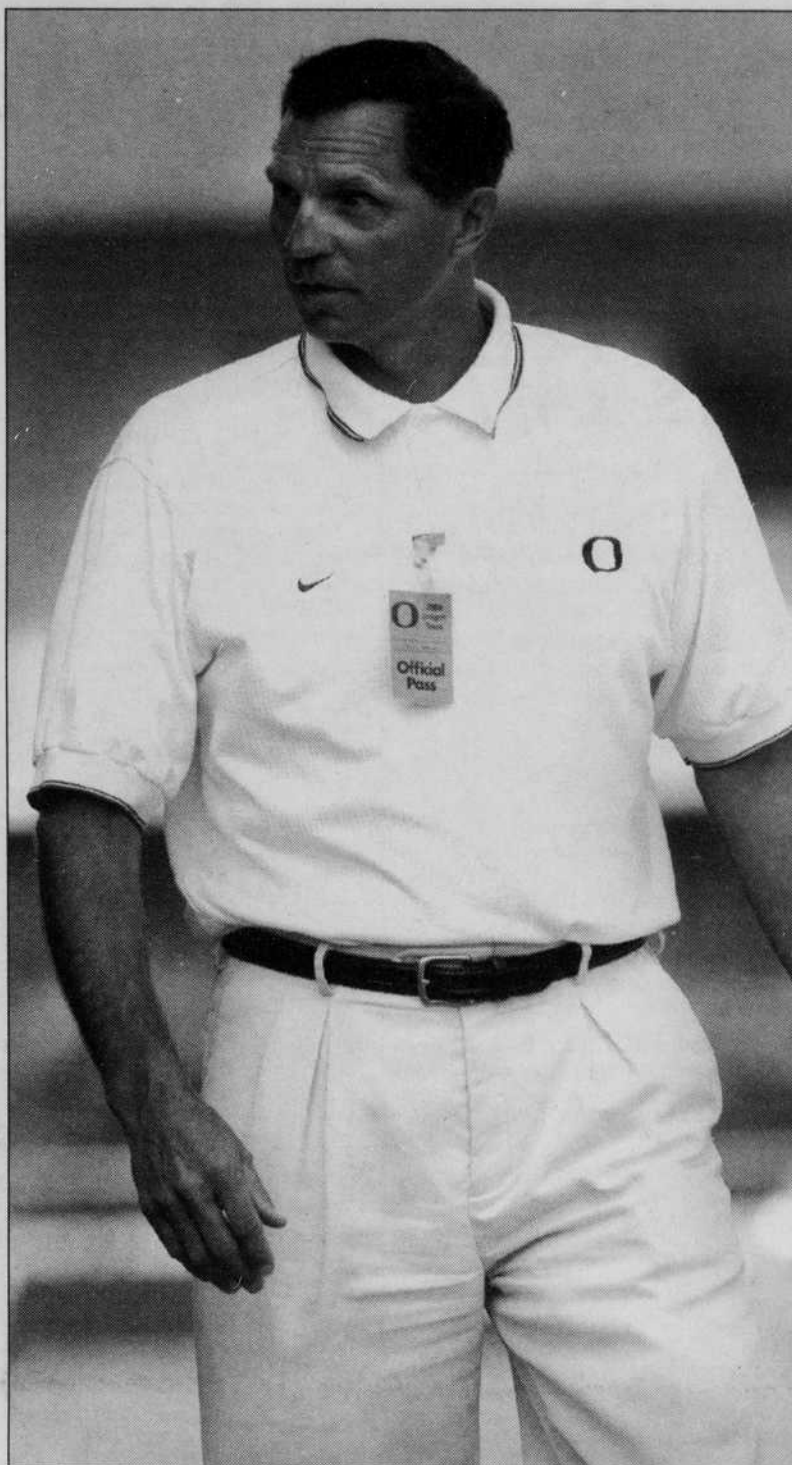
After competition this weekend, Bockelman said the regional system will be reviewed by the NCAA to search for needed improvements. This year's regional sites include Florida (Gainesville) in the East, Louisiana State in the Midwest, Texas A&M in the Midwest and Cal State Northridge in the West. The championship meet will be held June 9-12 at Mike A. Meyers Stadium in Austin, Texas.

Bockelman said that after two years of the system being in place, many of those who were stuck between supporting and opposing the regionals will likely lean towards favoring the system.

Oregon enters competition this weekend with several athletes in position to advance to the NCAAs. Jumps coach Bill Lawson said there's nothing an athlete or coach can do to change the system at this point and it will likely be the schools who can best adapt that will come out victorious.

"I think the good coaches will prevail," Lawson said. "The good coaches, who systematically peak their athletes correctly, without injury, are going to be the one's who get them through to the national meet. I've never been a big fan of the regional qualifying system, however, we're learning to work within that system and we're going to take as big an advantage with it as we can."

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Oregon jumps coach Bill Lawson said the regional system presents coaches with challenges and whoever makes the best of the situation will come out on top. The regional system began last year and is held in four separate quadrants — the West (Cal State Northridge), Midwest (Louisiana State), Midwest (Texas A&M) and East (Florida).

SPORTS BRIEFS

Wenslow earns CoSIDA award

Oregon golfer Therese Wenslow was named to the CoSIDA Academic All-District VIII At-Large second team Thursday.

The Bunkflostrand, Sweden native was Oregon's No. 3 golfer during the 2003-04 season, claiming a 77.1 scoring average. She carried a 4.02 grade point average in business administration this year.

White resigns from Oregon softball

Oregon assistant coach Mike White resigned his post with Duck softball Thursday, citing a desire to spend time with his family and pursue other interests, which includes running his investment company.

"This has been a great opportunity for me," White said in a release. "To be a part of an Oregon program that has steadily become one of the nation's top teams is an honor. There is a solid foundation and I have confidence in our pitching staff and our team that they will continue to build on what success we have started."

The pitchers White tutored in his

two seasons at Oregon include 2003 third-team All-American Andrea Vidlund and 2004 first-team All Pacific-10 Conference pitcher Ani Nyhus. Current sophomore Amy Harris set the single-season strikeout record with 180 in 2003, which was then broken by Nyhus with 202 this past season.

"Having Mike as a part of the rebuilding process was invaluable to our program," Oregon head coach Kathy Arendsen said. "His experience as a premier player has helped develop continued success over the past two seasons and our players respect him. We hope to have him involved in our program as we move forward."

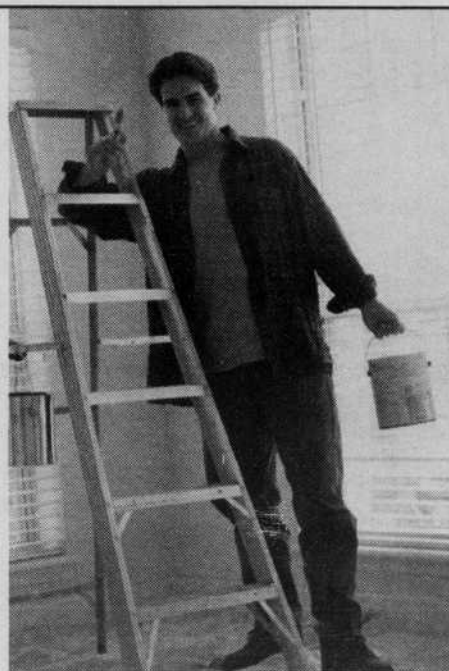
White, who was born in Wellington, New Zealand, became a United States citizen in 1994 and went 2-0 with a 0.89 ERA for the USA team at the 2000 World Championships. That club earned a bronze medal.

White, 42, and his wife, Lisa, have three daughters: Nyree (11), Kenzie (8) and Sidney (7).

"Our family will stay in Eugene because we are happy here," White said. "If it is possible, I would still like to stay connected with the Oregon program in some capacity."

— Hank Hager

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