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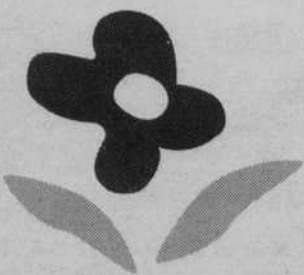
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SPORTS BRIEF

Duck women earn awards

The Oregon women's track and field team announced its year-end team award winners at the annual team banquet on Wednesday.

Sofie Abildtrup, a junior sprinter, earned the Harry Ritchie's Most Inspirational Award. The first-year Duck from Denmark ranks as one of the top 10 sprinters in Oregon history after running team season bests in the 100-meters (10th all-time, 12.01 seconds), 200-meters (seventh, 23.93) and 400-meters (third, 52.92).

Abby Andrus, a senior heptathlete, took home the Mary Officer High Point Award. The Peoria, Ariz. native qualified for the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships after placing third in the heptathlon with a personal

best (5,325 points) at this year's Pacific-10 Conference Championships.

Emily Enders, a freshman pole vaulter, received the Coaches Most Improved Award. The Snohomish, Wash. native earned an automatic invite to the NCAA Championships when she placed fifth (13 feet, 1 3/4 inches) at the NCAA West Regional Qualifier.

Sarah Malone, a junior javelin thrower, was voted the Lynne Winbiger Performer of the Year. Malone broke the javelin school record at 179-7 at the Texas Relays in April — a mark that ranks her third nationally among collegians.

Magdalena Sandoval, a junior distance runner, received the Cross Country Award after claiming Pac-10 First Team honors and a fifth-place finish at Pac-10s.

— Alex Tam

WOMEN

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and that I knew when I was a kid growing up. I feel more a part of a family that I ever have, and our coaches are incredible."

Malone holds the school's javelin record after tossing 179 feet, 7 inches at the Texas Relays in late March. The Newberg native is one of seven athletes invited to the upcoming NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Austin, Texas, beginning June 9.

Joining Malone at NCAAs is pole vaulter Kirsten Larwin, who is experiencing her finest season in her senior year at Oregon. The Eugene native achieved her outdoor personal best (13-6 1/4) at the Pac-10 Championships three weeks ago.

"This has been the best of year of track and field in my life," Larwin said. "With the new program, a lot of things were different, but better. I'm happy with the way things have gone with coach Smith as our head coach."

Proving people in the community wrong about the early perceptions of the women's team was one of the goals heading into the season, Larwin said.

"Nobody (on the team) said it was a rebuilding year," Larwin said. "We took it upon ourselves to say 'No, we are competitors and we have talent on this team to do things' and we did."

One of those highlights included the women's victory at the Pepsi Team Invitational at Hayward Field in mid-April. The Ducks defeated Colorado, Minnesota and Pac-10 foe Washington in the only team-scoring meet of the season.

The plan after the NCAA Championships will focus on recruiting quality athletes and molding the team into a national contender. However, Smith said that process will be slow with a long-term focus.

"We know all of the obvious things — we need to get more women on the team and we need to get more women through the recruiting process," Smith said. "We need to understand that's going to take time. It's not just going to be a quick fix because you don't want to make a mistake and bring in someone that's not the right fit or able to be legitimately competitive at a high level like the Pac-10."

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