SPORTS BRIEFS

UO Freshmen in Top 10 of U.S. Junior Championships

Oregon freshman Kyle Alcorn won the 3,000-meter steeplechase race at the USA Junior Outdoor Track and Field Championships in College Station, Texas on Sunday.

Alcorn defeated second-place finisher Derek Scott of Cornerstone by three seconds with a time of 9 minutes, 10.37 seconds.

"Winning means a lot to me," Alcorn said. "I was here last year in the steeple and placed 10th. It was my first time ever doing it — I was experimenting with it. I didn't actually train for it. I came back this year and just so happened to win."

As a result, Alcorn received an automatic invite to compete for the United States at the World Junior Championships beginning July 13 in Grosetto, Italy.

In the discus, freshman Brandon Tower placed 10th with a mark of 172 feet, 2 inches. The Beaverton native joined the Ducks last year as the state's top combined shot put and discus prospect after winning the Oregon 4A state title.

Academic All-Americans

The College Sports Information Directors of America selected Oregon redshirt senior Ryan Andrus to the CoSIDA Academic All-America Men's Cross Country/Track and Field National First Team for the second straight season.

Andrus, an Orem, Utah native, had a 3.94 GPA in business administration. This year, he was a NCAA automatic outdoor qualifier in the 10,000 with his personal best at the Mt. SAC Relays (28:56.67). The time ranks him eighth all-time in Oregon history.

On the women's side, senior pole vaulter Kirsten Larwin was selected for the women's national third team with her 3.89 GPA majoring in French.

Larwin, a Eugene native, is a two-time Pacific-10 Conference All-Academic First Team selection from 2003 and 2004. She ranks third all-time for the Ducks with personal best at the Pac-10 Championships (13-6 1/4).

Oregon softball tabs new pitching coach

Oregon softball head coach Kathy Arendsen announced the hiring of new pitching coach Amy Hayes last Thursday.

Hayes, who has collegiate coaching experience in the Atlantic-10, America East and Missouri Valley conferences, replaces former assistant coach Mike White.

"Amy Hayes is an outstanding addition to our coaching staff," Arendsen said. "She brings to us a wealth of coaching experience, a strong pitching background and she is a proven recruiter."

In addition to recruiting, Hayes will coordinate camps, oversee facilities, coordinate strength and conditioning workouts and oversee areas of travel.

For the past four seasons, Hayes was head coach at Boston University where she took the program to back-to-back NCAA Regional appearances in the 2002 and 2003.

"For me to have the opportunity to coach at the University of Oregon is a dream come true," Hayes said. "To coach in the Pac-10 is nothing short of amazing. To be able to work with Coach Arendsen and her staff is also a great honor. She has brought a lot of success to the program and I want to help build on that success."

— Alex Tam

TAM

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Cleveland's LeBron James in 2003 — arguably made the right decision to join the NBA at the right time.

On the other side, though, high school players who were not chosen first overall have mostly spent their time sitting at the end of the bench rather than playing and developing their game at the college level. It hurts them and the game they play.

A good start would be for colleges to continually emphasize NCAA rules when it comes to recruiting. Cleaning up its image, which sees a small number of programs trying to cheat to gain an advantage, needs to be addressed.

In the end, it can only benefit the schools, the sports and, especially, the athletes themselves.

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JACKSON

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Rather than travel to New York for the draft, Jackson spent the time with his family and friends at home, where he said he felt more comfortable. As soon as NBA Commissioner David Stern announced his name on television, the celebration immediately broke out, said Jackson.

"Everyone kind of just leapt up in the air and we were all just hugging each other," Jackson said. "It was great. Until your name gets called out, you get super anxious and I was pretty anxious, so it feels good."

Jackson will team up with Cavaliers's guard LeBron James, last year's No. 1 overall selection, who is considered one of basketball's top players at only 19 years old. In James's rookie year, Cleveland improved its record by 18 wins from the previous year, but still missed the playoffs.

"He had a great year last year and I think the Cavs are a team that are on the up and up in the NBA," Jackson said. "They made a huge turnaround last year and they're going to be a contender for years to come. I just feel like I'm lucky to get on a team that's a good fit for me like that, so I feel very blessed."

Cleveland expects Jackson to fill its need for a young player who can consistently make shots from the outside — a lost art in modern-day basketball.

"He's an athlete," Cavaliers head coach Paul Silas told the Cleveland Plain-Dealer. "He can penetrate to the hoop and finish. He's a good free-throw shooter and we were looking for someone who could stretch the defense. He understands how to play." A three-year guaranteed contract worth more than $4 million dollars is waiting for Jackson, a fact that he feels privileged to earn.

"It doesn't seem like you should get paid that much for something that you love," Jackson said. "I have the best job in the world now."

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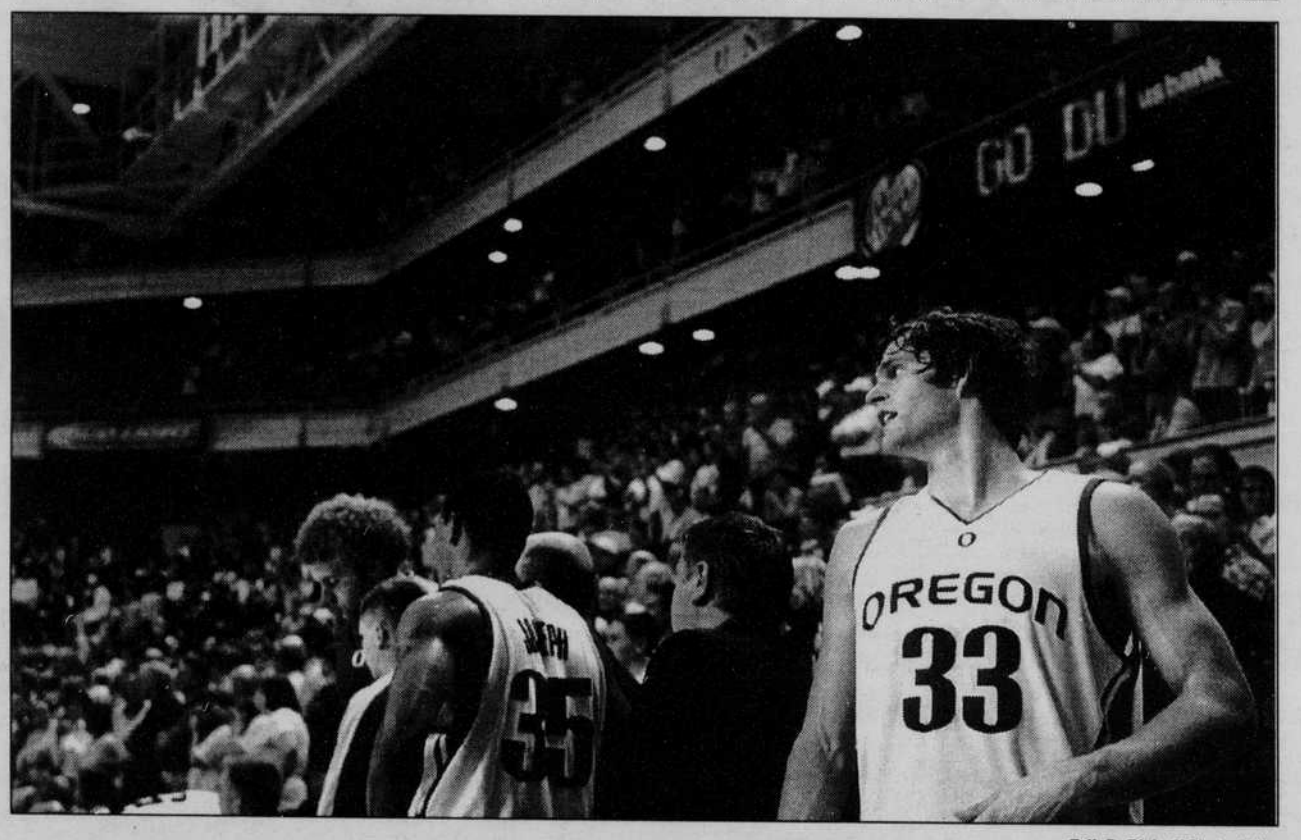

Erik R. Bishoff Photo Editor

Luke Jackson (#33) takes a breather during the final moments of his last game at McArthur court. The Ducks dropped the UCLA Bruins after Jackson scored a pair of game-winning free-throws.

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