

Tuesday, July 6, 2004

Oregon trio heads to Olympic Trials

Starting Friday, three track and field members take aim at Olympic dreams

ALEX TAM
SPORTS EDITOR

Three members of Oregon's track and field team have the chance to gain national fame and move on to compete on the world's greatest athletic stage.

Oregon's Tommy Skipper, Sarah Malone and Eric Mitchum will compete at the 2004 U.S. Olympic Team Trials in Sacramento starting Friday.

The top three finishers from each event earn a spot on the U.S. Olympic team that will compete in this summer's Olympic Games in Athens beginning August 13. Each top-three finisher has to meet Olympic 'A' qualifying standards.

Skipper, who just completed his freshman year at Oregon, will take part in the men's pole vault qualifying round at 3:30 p.m. on Friday. His entrance is based on his personal best of 18 feet, 10 1/4 inches from the NCAA West Regional in May. The mark meets the Olympic 'A' qualifying standard of 18-8 1/4.

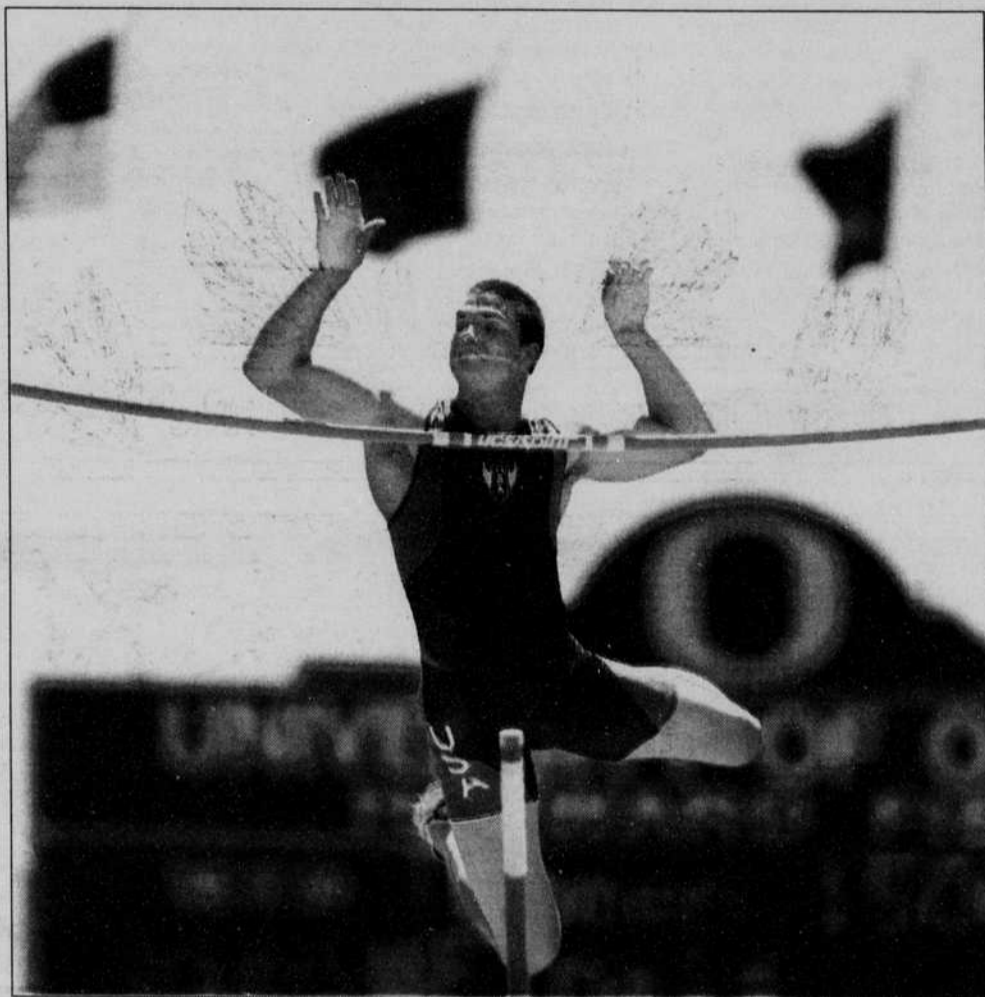
Skipper said he is grateful for the chance to compete for a spot on the U.S. Olympic team, but his first priority is to fulfill his goals at the collegiate level.

"That's everybody's goal — to be a part of the U.S. team," said Skipper, who is the reigning Pacific-10 Conference champion in the pole vault and the decathlon. "I'd be honored to be able to do that, but you have to take baby steps. I'm just going to do the best that I can on that day."

The Sandy native competed against the nation's top pole vaulters at the Prefontaine Classic two weeks ago. Skipper finished eighth after clearing 18-4 1/2.

Despite finishing next to last in the event, Skipper said he was "happy" with his performance and learned a lot from his competitors, but hopes to be a little more rested for the Olympic Trials.

"I think that was a little too soon to jump again," Skipper said. "I needed to take a little bit of time and just relax and rest, but it gave me



Erik R. Bishoff Online & Photo Editor

Oregon freshman Tommy Skipper will compete at the U.S. Olympic Team Trials in Sacramento in the pole vault. Skipper holds a personal best of 18 feet, 10 1/4 inches, which is an Olympic 'A' qualifying mark.

good experience jumping with those guys. I feel pretty confident going into Trials."

That confidence heading into his first Olympic Trials will help him believe in himself, said Skipper.

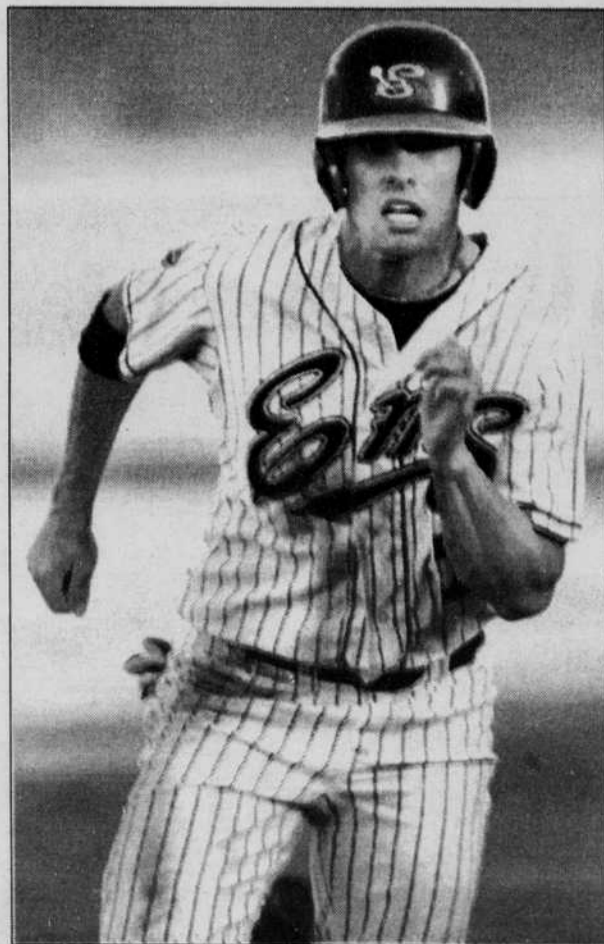
"I'm going to take it just like any other meet," Skipper said. "There's nothing different about the

Trials from NAAs or a meet here at home. It's the same runway, same pit and same holes. Everything is the same."

Malone, another Oregon hopeful, will compete in the javelin throw competition at 7:15 p.m. on Friday.

Please see TRIALS, page 8

Eugene Emeralds step up their game



Outfielder Craig Johnson has a .290 batting average through 18 games so far this season. Jared Paben Editor in Chief

The Ems hope to build on recent hitting and pitching successes

STEVE APEL
FREELANCE REPORTER

The Eugene Emeralds may finally be turning the corner after their first series victory of the season.

After dropping both games in a double header in Boise this past Wednesday, Eugene won three of its next five games against Salem-Keizer and also five of its last 10 overall.

After a slow start, the Emeralds have crept out of the basement in the West Division of the Northwest League. Eugene still sits in the bottom half of the division with a 7-11 record after Monday's 10-3 loss to Salem-Keizer in front of 2,555 fans at Volcanoes Stadium.

Eugene's series victory against visiting Salem-Keizer this past weekend was its first of the season. Eugene followed it up with a stellar 9-0 shutout on Sunday in Salem-Keizer. The Ems had four pitchers combine for a three-hitter and catcher Colt Morton added a

home run — his fifth in his last four games.

The team is beginning to show its potential when the offense gets behind steady pitching.

"The biggest problem has been making contact from one night to the next," Eugene manager Roy Howell said. "They are young and one night they'll do great and the next they'll do completely different." In the Ems' last three losses, they have combined for a total of three runs.

The question is whether the Ems are providing only a brief glimpse of hope or whether the ship is beginning to turn around.

The defining point came Saturday when a power outage knocked out the lights on the roof at Civic Stadium. The Ems gave up a late 4-3 lead in the eighth inning to Salem-Keizer.

After a 30-minute delay, Eugene rallied in its last at-bat for a 5-4 win in front of a sold out crowd of 7,126.

The pitching has continued to be solid for the Emeralds.

Behind solid outings such as those from Danny De La O in last

Please see EMS, page 6



ALEX TAM
HOLDING COURT

The right decision was made

The world of professional sports is what all athletes and coaches aspire to be a part of during their career.

It is many people's dream to make millions of dollars for simply playing or coaching a sport they love.

Many of those dreams were fulfilled this summer as professional basketball teams reloaded their rosters with the best available talent from college and high school at the NBA Draft.

However, there is one jump to the professional ranks that has seen more failures than successes.

That jump is a college basketball head coach moving on to the NBA.

On Monday, arguably, one of college basketball's greatest head coaches of all-time, Duke's Mike Krzyzewski, declined an offer to become the head coach of, arguably, one of the greatest professional sports franchises of all-time, the Los Angeles Lakers, according to www.ESPN.com.

The Web site reported that the Lakers offered Krzyzewski a five-year, \$40 million contract — exactly \$8 million per year for a coach who has continually succeeded at the college level, but has not proved himself at the professional level.

Krzyzewski, who has led three NCAA championships at Duke, has a 621-181 all-time record at Duke and 10 Final Four appearances and 10 Atlantic Coast Conference regular season championships.

If there was ever a college sports head coach who deserved a chance to take the helm of a professional sports franchise, Krzyzewski would be the one.

However, the jump from college to the NBA has continually proven to be unsuccessful.

Remember successful college head coaches such as Lon Kruger, Tim Floyd and Leonard Hamilton, who were hired by NBA teams because of their winning records in college?

Those three failed to translate what made them winners at the college level to the pro level.

Kruger, who owned a 318-233 record in 18 seasons prior to coming to the NBA, had a putrid 69-122 record as head coach of the NBA's Atlanta Hawks from 2000 to 2003.

Floyd, who posted an 81-49 record at Iowa State, joined the NBA's Chicago Bulls in 1998 after the team had won six league championships. However, in his first two seasons as head coach, he led Chicago to a 30-102 record.

Hamilton, who led the University of Miami to three straight NCAA Tournament appearances from 1998 to 2000 for the first time in school history, was hired by the NBA's Washington Wizards the next year.

Hamilton lasted only one season, which ended with a 19-63 record for Washington and a call for his immediate resignation.

It's possible that the trend of failures from college to the NBA was a huge reason for Krzyzewski to decline the Los Angeles offer and remain at Duke.

Or it could be that the egos and money that surround the professional game was

Please see TAM, page 8