

*"I feel like I am pregnant with all these ideas. I am just trying to give birth to them."*

Toronto Blue Jays pitcher Miguel Batista describing his writing career

## Mother Duck: Harmon leads cross country flock

*As Oregon's lone senior harrier, Laura Harmon embraces her role as the team's leader and mom*

BY BEAU EASTES  
FREELANCE SPORTS REPORTER

Laura Harmon is many things to her young Oregon cross country team.

Leader by example, coach on the field, inspiration to others, workout warrior — but caregiver?

"She's the mom of the team," Mandi Fitz-Gustafson said, a junior transfer from Arizona State. "She coordinates functions and she's really supportive. Everyone loves Laura."

Harmon, the lone senior on a Duck harrier squad whose roster is made up primarily of freshmen, has embraced the role of Mother Goose.

"I like being in that leadership role," Harmon said. "I've always kind of been in that role, even in high school."

Case in point: Last week on a morning when Harmon didn't have class or workouts, the psychology major got up early and made blueberry practice pancakes for her teammates who did have morning commitments.

"I knew they probably had a tough workout and thought it would be nice," said the Vancouver, Wash., native.

The only thing more impressive than Harmon's eagerness to help her teammates with almost any task is her ability come to race day ready to focus and take care of business.

Harmon has finished in the top 16 of all her races this season, including the Roy Griak Invitational and the Pre-NCAA Invitational, the two most competitive regular season races in the country. This is on the heels of Harmon's top-20 finish (18th, 17 minutes, 18 seconds) in the 5,000 meter at the NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championships last spring.

On top of her pursuit to make the NCAA Championships, Harmon has helped lead and nurture a Duck team with very limited collegiate experience.

"She shares experiences; she has input on courses and she always has an open door," said freshman Maegan Kuntz.

"Laura has really stepped into the role of captain and leader by setting a good example," said



ERIK R. BISHOFF | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon's Laura Harmon (9), seen here last season, finished 18th in the 5,000 meter at the NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championships last spring. She is the lone senior on this season's Duck cross country team.

junior Haripurkh Khalsa, the Ducks No. 2 runner. "Coming in as a freshman, Laura really helped me."

Harmon's praise for leadership is also sung by her coach, Marnie Mason.

"She's really come into her own," the second-year coach said. "Her work ethic is next to none. The girls look up to her. She's a good teacher."

Harmon credits Mason with helping her get over her hump last year and into the next level of competition.

"She pushes me," said Harmon, who also believes maturity helped her become a better runner.

"We've got a good rapport," Mason said. "Laura and I really connect. She realized she had a lot more potential and dug down deep.

That was exciting."

Harmon was stricken with pneumonia in the summer of 2003 and redshirted the cross country season that fall. She trained for indoor and outdoor track under Mason and shaved 39 seconds off her 5,000 meters time.

"It was hard having patience," Harmon said about missing the cross country season. "But it was a confidence builder getting over it."

With that newfound confidence, Harmon has her sights set on a top-10 finish at the Pacific-10 Championships, ensuring All-Pac-10 honors, and an All-American finish at nationals after the West Regional.

Harmon's goals aren't simply personal; they're also part of a larger ambition.

"We know we're a young team," Khalsa said.

"We want to get everyone PRs (personal records) and get Laura in the top six at conference," Khalsa said.

After Harmon's collegiate athletic career ends this spring, the 5-foot-2 dynamo is contemplating a position that couldn't seem more natural — coach.

"I love running and watching other people do well," Harmon said.

If possible, Harmon says she would like to serve as an assistant under Mason, helping train a group she says has "huge potential to be great runners."

It's a role that would be familiar to Harmon, one that would undoubtedly come naturally.

Beau Eastes is a freelance reporter for the Daily Emerald

### Men's golf

## Minnesota wins Big Ten/Pac-10 event

*The No. 20 Golden Gophers edge out No. 10 USC Trojans for the team title; Oregon finishes 12th*

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS  
FREELANCE SPORTS REPORTER

The Big Ten/Pac-10 Challenge concluded Tuesday as No. 20 Minnesota capped off a memorable comeback by defeating No. 10 Southern California in a tie-breaker. The Golden Gophers trailed the men of Troy by 13 strokes at one point in the tournament, which was held at the par-72, 7,040-yard Bandon Dunes Golf Course. Minnesota finished 4-over 292.

The Golden Gophers sat in sixth place at the end of the first round, but climbed the leaderboard thanks to impressive second-round play by Bronson La'Cassie, Niall Turner and Josh Persons. All three finished the tournament ranked in the top 20. USC couldn't keep pace with the explosive Golden Gophers, who rode their wave of momentum en route to a two-stroke win.

Nineteenth-ranked UCLA led the field by five strokes going into the second round but shot a 307 on Tuesday to fall to a third-place finish in the tournament with a combined score of 598. Fellow Pacific-10 Conference affiliate Arizona State finished three strokes behind the Bruins to take fourth place with a score of 601. Rounding out the top 10 were Northwestern (602), Washington (603), Arizona (605), Penn State (607), No. 21 Purdue (609) and Indiana (611).



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Oregon freshman Joey Benedetti studies his next putt at the Big Ten/Pac-10 Challenge in Bandon, Ore.

Host Oregon finished four strokes behind defending national champion Cal to take 12th place with a score of 620.

A Big Ten Conference team may have won the tournament, but the Pac-10 would be the victor as its schools posted a combined total score of plus-162. The Big Ten carded a plus-191.

Alejandro Canizares of Arizona State took home the individual title after shooting

consecutive 71s to finish with a 2-under 142. Second and third place were also occupied by Pac-10 golfers as Washington's Alex Prugh finished behind Canizares with a 1-over 143. USC's Taylor Wood followed at an even-par 144.

The Ducks were carried in the second round by freshman Joey Benedetti, who

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### IN BRIEF

#### Swinnen wins singles title at regional tournament

Senior Sven Swinnen became the first player in Oregon men's tennis history to capture the Intercollegiate Tennis Association Wilson/ITA Men's West Regional title in Berkeley, Calif., Tuesday.

The 23-year-old Swinnen, who was seeded No. 2 in the tournament, defeated Portland's Matt Loucks in a tough three-set match, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3, in the singles main draw finals.

"It was a great week of tennis for the team and Sven," Oregon assistant coach Ross Duncan said. "What separates Sven from his opponents is his ability to rebound with big points when down. He is the first Duck to ever win a regional title and we expect him to continue his solid play at the national indoor tournament."

For his victory, Swinnen received an automatic bid to participate in the four-day ITA National Indoor Championships in Ann Arbor, Mich., which begins Nov. 4.

Swinnen is currently the No. 12-ranked singles player in the nation, which is the highest all-time ranking for the Oregon men's tennis program.

The West Regional tournament was one of nine ITA regional tournaments played throughout the country the past two weeks. The singles draw finalists and the doubles draw champions in each of the nine tournaments earned an automatic bid to the ITA National Indoor Championships.

— Alex Tam