

"Our freshmen are doing a good job producing, so as far as I'm concerned, they can be as cocky as they want."

Oregon first baseman Beth Boskovich on the confidence level of the softball team's young players

■ Women's track and field

UO heads to Berkeley for Golden Bear invite

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

A large portion of the Oregon women's track and field team will achieve a "first" for the 2005 outdoor season this weekend.

The Ducks will travel to Berkeley, Calif., on Saturday for the Golden Bear Invitational, making this journey the team's first outdoor meet away from Hayward Field.

California, Houston, Portland State, Sacramento State and Boise State have athletes entered into the meet. Unattached athletes are expected to compete as well.

Oregon's first road trip of the season may not be as substantial as what Kasey Harwood accomplished in her first outdoor race for the Ducks, but it's still a first, nonetheless.

Harwood, a freshman middle distance runner, competed in the women's 400-meter hurdles at last week's Pepsi Team Invitational and won.

"That was a nice surprise," Harwood said. "I didn't think I would get into the record books that soon."

"It was the first 400 hurdles race that I'd done, so I was really nervous. I thought about it a lot and prepared for it and then just went out and did what I could."

Harwood took the event with 61.08 seconds, edging out teammate and training partner Kayla Mellott.

"I was going to her for advice before the race," Harwood said.

The same hurdle-hopping duo will be running the 400-meter hurdles this weekend. They hold the second- and third-best times in the field, behind sophomore Tiffany Abney of Houston (58.60).

Oregon's Lauryn Jordan will add two new events to her résumé, the 100-meter hurdles and the javelin. She will also compete in the long jump and triple jump, both events she won at the Pepsi Invitational.

"I want her to be really strong as a heptathlete," Oregon assistant coach Rock Light said. "Right now everything is leading up to her heptathlon at the Oregon Invitational."

Sofie Abildtrup is signed up for the 100, although she is known as Oregon's primary 400-meter runner. Last week, she took second in the 200-meter dash.

"Now it's time for her to get faster in the shorter events to be ready for the 400 later on," Light said.

Abildtrup's seeding mark (11.94) sits in the middle of the 11-sprinter pack. Oregon freshman Irie Searcy will run in the lane next to Abildtrup. The two sprinters will also participate in the 200. In a field of 20, Abildtrup holds the third-best seeding time in that event (23.93).

Oregon has opted not to invest any athletes in the distance running events — the 800, 1,500 and 3,000 meters.

Hammer thrower Brittany Hinchcliffe's listed seeding measurement of 197 feet 5 1/2 inches is almost two feet less than her school record at Oregon (199-2). Either way, she has at least a 10-foot advantage over the competition.

The Ducks have four javelin throwers slated to compete this weekend. Sarah Malone was recently reinstated and will compete after serving the better part of a two-week suspension for violating team policy. In addition, All-Americans Roslyn Lundene and Elisa Crumley will try to pick up the slack as they did last week, finishing first and second.

Senior Bree Fuqua is scheduled as Oregon's lone competitor in the shotput and discus events. She holds the school record in the shotput and has nearly a four-foot advantage this weekend.

stephenmiller@dailyemerald.com

■ Duck softball



EMERALD

Oregon head coach Kathy Arendsen talks to the Ducks' leadoff hitter Lovena Chaput after the end of an inning. Arendsen called Chaput a competitive player who is not intimidated by any situation and who has established herself as one of the top freshmen in the Pac-10.

Leadoff Lovena

Duck freshman Lovena Chaput's career is off and running, thanks to consistent hitting and poise

BY CLAYTON JONES
SPORTS EDITOR

Before practice, freshman Lovena Chaput talks nervously with an Oregon sports information director and teammate Beth Boskovich about how she is a bit apprehensive about doing a television interview.

"I'm not ready for this," said the 19-year-old Tualatin native, who leads the softball team in hitting during conference play with a .368 average. "I've never done one of these before."

Boskovich tells her with a smile, "You've got three more years so you might as well get used to it."

Oregon's starting left fielder and leadoff hitter rolls her eyes.

Chaput, who head coach Kathy Arendsen said is fearless and will take on any challenge, sneaks into the dugout as if to avoid the cameraman, but returns shortly after and conducts the interview.

Much like how she approaches the game she loves, Chaput stared adversity in the face and came through with a clutch performance.

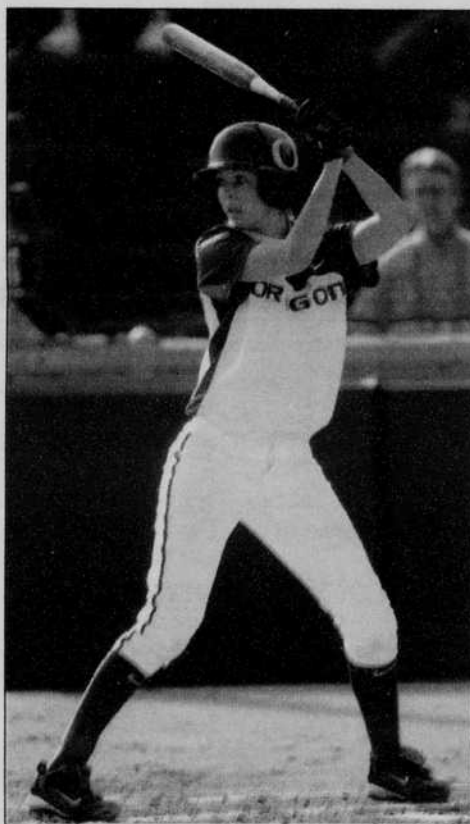
"Lovena has some inner strengths, and we recognized some and didn't know about others," the third-year coach said. "She handles adversity better than most young players ... She is not intimidated. She is not overly impressed. She's respectful and has good confidence."

And with good reason.

The left-handed hitting Chaput has already been named player of the week in arguably the toughest conference in the nation. She leads the team this season in hits (37), runs (20), doubles (8) and total bases (61), while sharing the team lead in home runs (4) and triples (2).

Fellow freshman teammate Alicia Cook said Chaput's production at the plate is amazing for her age.

"She's definitely not playing like a freshman," Cook said. "She plays like she has been here forever. She consistently hits the



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Freshman Lovena Chaput leads Oregon's softball team this season in hits (37), runs (20), doubles (8), and total bases (61), and is tied for the team lead in home runs (4) while maintaining a .336 batting average.

ball ... In a game where we walk away with only two or three hits, it's a pretty safe bet that she has one of them."

The one aspect of Chaput's hitting approach Arendsen enjoys is her ability to adjust at the plate.

"She can take a bad swing at a bad pitch and be able to adjust in that at-bat and get a base hit," Arendsen said. "She is a very competitive woman."

Not only have pitchers enjoyed her production at the plate, but so have those that hit behind her. Boskovich, the Ducks' No. 3 hitter, said that having a hitter like Chaput hitting a few spots ahead of her is a luxury.

"It's always nice to have your leadoff batter get on base all the time," Boskovich said. "And when she gets on second or third half the time, it's nice because you don't have to waste a sacrifice bunt."

While Chaput may be gaining notoriety around Eugene for her hitting, many don't know that she was actually born to Grant and Lovena just down the road from the University at Sacred Heart Medical Center.

Why the same name as her mother?

■ Men's track and field

Mitchum, Ikwuakor headline UO at Cal

BY BRIAN SMITH
SPORTS REPORTER

The Oregon men's track and field team returns to action this weekend as it heads south to compete in the Golden Bear Invitational in Berkeley, Calif., on Saturday.

The Ducks' third outdoor meet of the season will feature a strong contingent of Oregon sprinters, highlighted by the hurdling duo of Eric Mitchum and A.K. Ikwuakor.

Over the last two meets, Mitchum and Ikwuakor have captured three hurdles titles, with Ikwuakor winning the 400-meter hurdles at both meets. The Arvada, Colo., native notched a personal best time of 51.47 seconds at the Pepsi Invitational, bettering his time at the Oregon Preview by more than 1.4 seconds.

Ikwuakor will compete against Houston's senior sprinter Andrew Carruthers, who has run a personal best of 50.50 in the event.

Last year, Carruthers finished second at the Conference USA Championships in the 400 and finished third at the Midwest Regional Championships with a time of 51.08.

Carruthers, Ikwuakor and Mitchum are the only entrants in the 400-meter hurdles on Saturday to post times under 52 seconds in the event.

Carruthers will also compete in the 110-meter hurdles with Mitchum, Houston teammate Milton Mason, and California sophomore Thomas Mack. Carruthers finished fourth at the Tom Tellez Invitational with a time of 14.13, while Mack ran a lifetime-best 14.12 at the Stanford Invitational. Both men will be chasing Mitchum, the Ducks' top-returning hurdler from last year.

In last week's Pepsi Invitational, Mitchum cruised to a victory in the 110, beating teammate Ikwuakor by 0.4 seconds. Mitchum owns the field's best mark, with last season's 13.38 at the NCAA Championships in Texas.

In addition, Mitchum will pull double duty and compete in the 110 at the Mt. SAC Relays in Walnut, Calif., on Sunday.

Also on the track, a quintet of Ducks will compete in the 200-meter dash with red-shirt sophomore Jordan Kent and junior Matt Scherer leading the way.

Kent will be competing in his second event of the season, coming off his win last week in the 100-meter dash at the Pepsi Invitational.

Kent, along with Scherer, will be chasing the regional qualifying mark of 21.19. Kent last competed in the 200 at the NCAA Outdoor preliminaries in 2003, where he finished 20th with a time of 21.50.

Oregon javelin thrower Matt Adams and senior long jumper Leonidas Watson will lead the way for the Ducks in the field events.

Adams will compete against some of the best throwers in the country, headlined by California's Paul Teinert. Teinert is ranked fourth in the nation after setting a personal record of 235 feet, 9 inches last week at the Brutus Hamilton Memorial Invitational. Also competing will be Canadian national record holder Scott Russell, who comes in with a personal best of 267-11.

"I want to hit the best I can," Adams said. "There are some pretty good throwers there, and it will be pretty good competition. Hopefully I can step up and do good."

Watson will look to improve on his triple jump regional qualifying mark of 50-6 3/4 set last week at the Pepsi Invitational.

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briansmith@dailyemerald.com