

"He really doesn't get much lift...he pretty much only needs to stand up in front of the net, and he's blocking the basket."

Keith Gatlin on 7-foot-8 Sun Minming, who will be the tallest player in NBA history if drafted

■ In my opinion



CLAYTON JONES
SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

How fantasy baseball has swiftly taken over my life

Fantasy baseball has got a hold of me.

After years of avoiding the computer-junkie league, I broke down and joined this season with the guys on the sports staff, and now I'm addicted.

My lifestyle in the office has changed. My routine used to be to check my e-mail, see what's going on in the world of Oregon sports, write an article or column and do my other sports editorial duties.

Now I come in, check my fantasy team, check my e-mail, check my fantasy team, check on the world of Oregon sports, check my fantasy team, write an article or column and do my sports editorial duties and, you guessed it, check my fantasy team.

I always thought of myself as a true baseball guru and not a person who needed to join a fantasy league to keep the game interesting.

I thought I was too much of a purist and that being involved with a league would cheapen the reasons why I loved to watch America's pastime.

But — and excuse the dorky Star Wars expression — I went to the dark side.

I joined the league, and my life at work hasn't been the same since. I pepper my co-workers with trade proposals as I try to build an unstoppable force in the world of fantasy baseball.

I watch the annoying ticker on the bottom of ESPN to see if my players have had a big day.

I keep track of every game that goes on during the course of a day. I see if Carl Crawford will get out of his slump in Tampa Bay and be a top outfielder for my team. At no other time would I EVER care what the Devil Rays are doing.

I wonder if Colorado's Clint Barnes can keep hitting at a torrid pace or if Curt Schilling will ever recover from his injury.

I scour the waiver wires for players and put more effort and research into this league than a normal human being really should.

I pray to the baseball gods that Ben Sheets' inner ear problems have healed up and that Dontrelle Willis and Brett Myers can keep pitching above expectation.

But I'm in the middle of this moral dilemma.

I am enjoying baseball more, but I feel like I'm enjoying it for the wrong reasons. It's kind of like watching Baywatch for its mesmerizing "acting."

It has changed me.

If I quit the league, I still won't watch baseball the same as before. I'm losing the appreciation for the little aspects of the game: moving a runner to third with less than two outs, a good pickoff move, the squeeze play or a pitchers duel (unless one of my pitchers is throwing and I have no one offensively on either of the teams).

The season is only a quarter of the way through, but the way I view baseball may have forever been changed because of stat-driven entertainment.

But I do follow one fantasy baseball commandment that all people should (but don't) follow:

Thou shall not cheer for thy fantasy team over one's allegiance to thy favorite team.

Ever.

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■ Men's track and field

Oregon captures 12 NCAA berths

The Ducks are poised to do well at nationals despite the absence of pole vaulter Tommy Skipper

BY BRIAN SMITH
SPORTS REPORTER

The Oregon men's track and field team endured turbulent weather conditions on Saturday en route to capturing 12 individual berths in next month's NCAA Championships in Sacramento, Calif.

However, the most notable absentee in Sacramento will be the defending champion in the pole vault, Oregon sophomore Tommy Skipper.

Vaulting into a strong headwind, Skipper failed to clear his initial height of 17 feet, 1 inch and in the process, failed to qualify for a chance to defend his title.

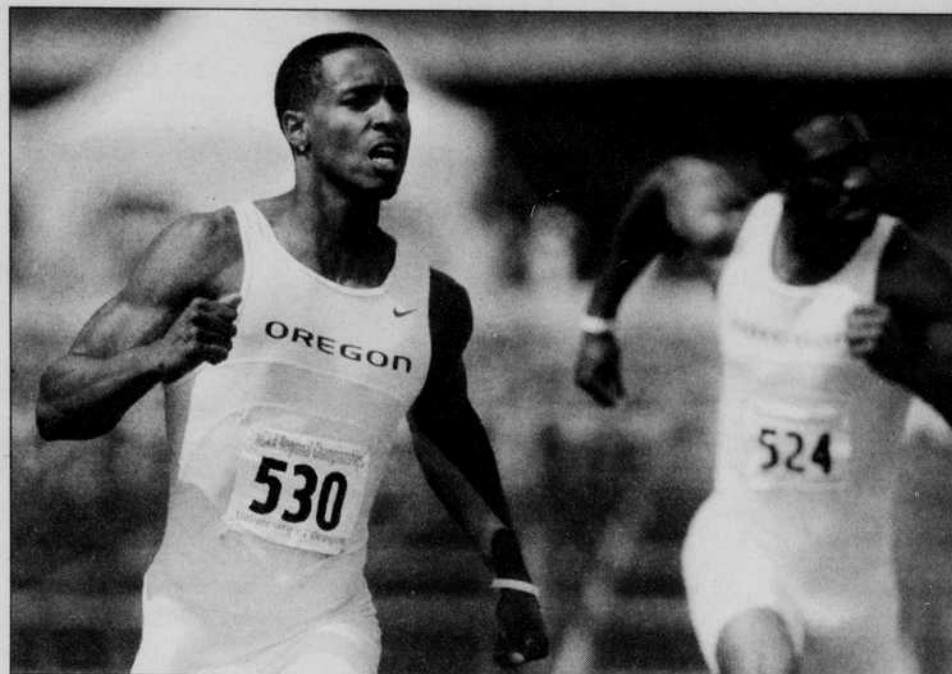
On his first attempt, Skipper knocked the bar off with his feet on the way up. On the next attempt, he bailed halfway up, collapsing into the pit with his pole in hand. On his third attempt, the Sandy native never got off the ground as he fired his pole into the pit after botching the approach.

"It was a bad day for everybody on the runway," Skipper said. "The headwinds were really strong, and it makes you move your approach up, and yet you have to still try and stay relaxed. I felt really good in the warm-ups, and I had a really good attempt on my first try, so I had confidence even after that."

Skipper's absence puts Oregon's NCAA title hopes in a more precarious position than they were directly following the Duck's victory at the Pacific-10 Championships earlier this month.

After taking the title in Los Angeles, the Ducks vaulted into third in the Trackwire team Top-25. Oregon was picked to finish third in the NCAA meet by Trackwire, and many believed the Ducks held a decent shot at winning their sixth team title in school history.

However, those goals came with Skipper successfully defending his title and scoring



TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon junior hurdler Eric Mitchum cruises to victory in the 110 meters at the West Regional Championships on Saturday. Mitchum finished .44 seconds ahead of second-place finisher Blake Frazier of Southern California.

10 critical points for the Ducks.

Though Oregon's title hopes have been shaken, they certainly haven't crumbled. Of the 20 Ducks sent to Regionals, 12 secured spots and three others have the chance to capture at-large bids.

The Ducks nabbed three individual titles at the meet, led by hurdler Eric Mitchum.

The junior defended his regional title in the 110-meter hurdles with a time of 13.65 seconds, finishing ahead of Southern California's Blake Frazier (14.09). Despite stumbling out of the blocks, Mitchum was only .03 seconds off his time at the Pac-10s.

Saturday also saw the continued, unexpected rise of senior Kedar Inico. The Queens, N.Y., native captured his second straight 400-meters title, coming from behind to beat Arizona State's Domenik Peterson.

"I did get a little behind, but I still knew I had it because I had a lot saved," Inico said. "I wish my time was a little bit faster, but that's fine because it's all about going to Sacramento, and that's what I came here to do."

Inico's teammate Matt Scherer also earned a trip to Sacramento by finishing fourth in the 400 with a time of 46.52 seconds.

In the distances, freshman Galen Rupp finished fifth in the 5,000 with a time of 13:59.11. Rupp led the race briefly in the final few laps, but Arizona's Robert Cheseret overtook Rupp and the rest of the field, separating himself from the pack over the final two laps.

"This was a good experience for me,"

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■ Women's track and field

Malone rewrites Duck javelin record

Sarah Malone landed a throw at 186-10, three inches farther than her previous school record

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

Oregon's Sarah Malone took a simple approach in the final rounds of competition during the NCAA West Regional Championships on Saturday.

As a thunderstorm and accompanying lightning show moved in, Malone made sure they wouldn't steal the crowd's attention before she made her last javelin throw at Hayward Field.

"She had already gotten to the show, and we knew that, and she was kind of just having some fun," Oregon throws coach Lance Deal said. "I don't know if she thought about it, I certainly hadn't until after her fourth throw. I called her over, and I said, 'This time, why don't you think about the fact that you have two more throws on this track as an Oregon athlete.' I asked her to smile before she started throwing."

Malone's javelin struck the ground 186 feet, 10 inches away from where she released it, with more brilliance than any lightning rod. The distance set new school and personal records, solidified Malone's second-consecutive West



TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior Sarah Malone improved Oregon's javelin record and her personal best with a mark of 186-10 during her Hayward Field finale at the NCAA West Regionals.

Regional championship and guaranteed her a trip to Nationals. And all she had to do was smile.

"That's what I did," said Malone, whose team finished eighth with 36 points. "I just took it all in, and it just came out perfect."

Two weeks ago, Malone used a toss of 170-9 to win her first Pacific-10 Conference Championship title after three runner-up finishes. Her previous personal best was 179-7

and her season-best up until last weekend was 177-1. Malone felt most pleased about breaking the 180-foot mark in front of Oregon's home crowd.

"To be able to give that to the crowd here at Hayward is just amazing," Malone said. "I've been chipping away at that wall for a while and just finally got through it."

Malone's mark of 186-10 stands as the third best throw in the nation and the second best toss by a collegian this season. Teammates Roslyn Lundeen (155-9) and Rachael Kriz Wallace (151-3) finished sixth and seventh in the event, respectively. Kriz Wallace, who set a personal record Saturday, and Lundeen are eligible for at-large bids to Nationals.

Oregon senior Bree Fuqua finished fifth in the shot put as her first heave of 52-0 held up over the six-round competition.

"Bree went out just like last year; good throw on her first throw, not a great throw, and she held on," Deal said. "She got a little bit lucky."

Fuqua won the first flight of the discus competition earlier Saturday but finished seventh overall with a best throw of 163-5. The Polson, Mont., native still has a chance to be invited to Nationals, as does her teammate, redshirt junior Brittany Hinchcliffe, who finished sixth

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