

"We know about the 11-1 record, and we would have liked to go 11-0. But we won enough games, and that's all that matters."

Chicago White Sox catcher A.J. Pierzynski on his team's World Series victory

■ Duck cross country

Oregon runners are primed for postseason

With three major tournaments coming up, the men and women look to make their marks

BY KIM GAVIGLIO
FREELANCE REPORTER

After a successful season for the Oregon cross country team, it's finally time to bring on the postseason competition.

The meets that lie ahead for Ducks' cross country team in the next month and a half are going to make the earlier races look like a warm-up. With the Pacific-10 Championships, West Regionals and the NCAA Nationals, the postseason is where the action is for the men and women of Oregon.

Saturday marks the first meet of the post-season, the Pacific-10 Conference Championship, hosted by the University of Arizona.

"This isn't a qualifying meet, but it is still a championship meet because if we get third or fourth that means we are third or fourth in the Pac-10," said Chris Winter, Oregon's number two runner on the men's team. "This meet is extremely important with our conference. If we have a really good race here then it can build our confidence for regionals."

The top seven individuals from each race will claim All Pac-10 First Team honors. With defending champion and top-ranked Stanford competing, earning a top spot will be tough, but Oregon has a few hopefuls who have the potential to be top scorers, including Galen Rupp, Winter, Zoe Nelson and Katie Leary.

Sophomore runner Sarah Pearson said training this season has been based on developing high endurance and staying in top shape. Pearson kicked up her running ability and ran in the second seeded position, behind Leary, for the Ducks at the Pre-NCAA Invitational meet on Oct. 15.

"We have been focusing a lot less on numbers this season," Pearson said. "We focus on working hard, and the numbers are going to reflect our hard work. I love the coaching so much. This year is so much better for me. Last year was focused on short intervals and lower mileage, but different things work for different people."

The goal for this weekend's meet is for the No. 22 Oregon women to place third in the meet. The main competition for the ladies is No. 2 Stanford and fifth-ranked Arizona State. This season the women's team has become nationally ranked for the first time in five years under first-year head coach Vin Lananna.

"It has been really exciting to be a part of this change at Oregon," Pearson said. "But we're not focusing too much on the ranking because it's not exactly where we want to be. I think we have the potential to do great things. We have a lot of talented recruits, and running with them has been really motivating."

On the men's side, competition will be tight because many of the Pac-10 teams are evenly matched.

"Stanford and Arizona are top in the nation. They're basically the untouchables," Winter said. "But Washington and Arizona State are probably going to be the closest-matched teams for us to go against. But we're going to focus on staying as close together as a pack and talking to one another, giving each other confidence to pull forward."

"We haven't been focusing all that much on individual performance but on team performance. This season has been really great. The dynamic

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■ Club men's rugby

Experienced rugby team starts season

The men's team has a new coach and hopes for continued success after last year's 9-6 campaign

BY JACOB MAY
FREELANCE REPORTER

After finishing the 2004 season with a team of mostly underclassmen, the men's club rugby team compiled a 9-6 record and is optimistic going into its season.

With a new coach, Manasi Latu, and most of the team returning with experience, the team hopes to make it past the first round of the playoffs, where it lost to Sacramento State and Stanford last year.

The team currently has roughly 35 members and always fields two teams of 15 at every game in order to give every team member a chance to play.

Key returning players include team captain and fly-half Michael Schwartz, lock-backrow Michael Estis and outside-center Aaron Loghry.

Despite the athletic ability the team currently possesses, club coordinator Joey Latteri hopes to bring in new members in order for the team to be more competitive. He emphasized that most people believe they need to have experience to play collegiate rugby, but he said that is not the case. The first several weeks of practice are spent on conditioning and teaching new recruits the rules and strategies of the game.

"We're trying to develop our level of play," Schwartz said. "We have a tremendous amount of athletic talent. We just need to

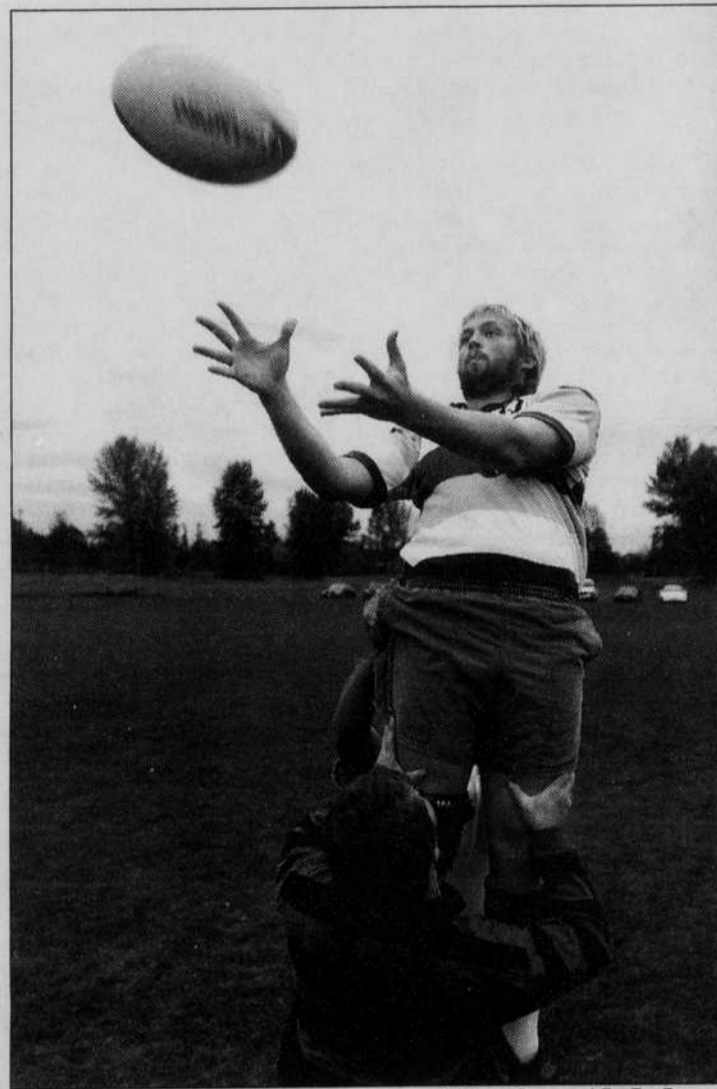
cultivate it and focus it in one coherent direction."

As for the team's outlook toward the new season, Schwartz hopes the club becomes a dominant force in its conference, the Northwest Rugby Football Union. The conference includes Pacific-10 Conference schools Oregon State, Washington, Washington State.

The club is still holding loose practices where the number of participants ranges from 20 to 35. Latteri explains that there are too many schedules to work around, and therefore many members are unable to come to practice. In that case, many of the athletes are responsible for conditioning themselves. The team is also actively recruiting and plans a fund-raising campaign in the near future.

The team has already played its first game, beating the Eugene Men's Rugby Club 14-12 on Oct. 15. The club's next game will take place at Stanford University in a tournament that will consist of 10 other teams. The team is guaranteed three games there. They will also host games against Chico State and Oregon State on Nov. 12 and 19.

It's still possible to join the team, which is always looking for new members. Practices are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2-5 p.m. at Southbank Field next to the Autzen footbridge. For more info, the team Web site can



MARCUS LARSON | FOR THE EMERALD

Brendan Hobbs gets some help from his teammates while practicing a line-out retrieval at Tuesday's Rugby Club practice.

be accessed through the Oregon Club Sports home page.

■ Duck soccer

Ducks seek first Pac-10 win in Seattle

Tara Erickson returns to her alma mater looking for the first Ducks win in the 10-game series

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS
SPORTS REPORTER

Oregon soccer head coach Tara Erickson last laced up her cleats no more than a decade ago as a Washington midfielder, but today she leads the Ducks into Seattle, where her squad looks for its first conference win of the season against her alma mater.

Despite the rivalry between the two schools, Erickson and her players do not look at this game as anything more than another chance at victory for Oregon (8-6-1 overall, 0-5 conference). The Oregon-Washington rivalry seems to have a reverse effect on relations between the two teams. Many of the players and coaches for both squads have shared the same sidelines and have developed friendships.

"The kids don't put as much emphasis on this game as other people around the program do, which is a good thing," Erickson said. "Our players aren't putting emphasis on it. I look at it as just another game, another chance for a win and nothing more than what it is."

Like Erickson, senior forward Nicole Garbin of Oregon also has friends at Washington. She played

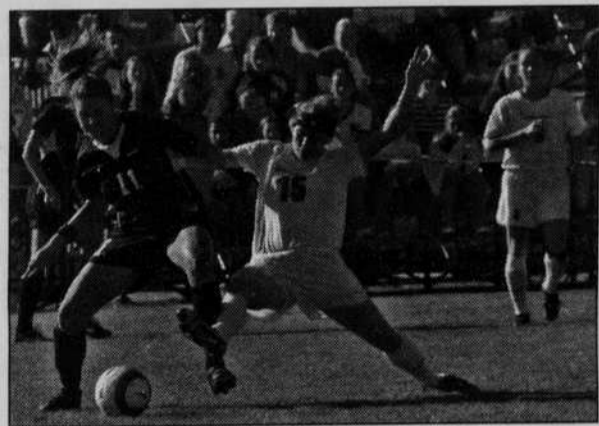
for the Seattle Sounders last summer alongside some of the Huskies. However, Garbin has not had a chance to play against Washington since her freshman year. Injuries sidelined her in 2002 and 2004 and she was required to sit out in 2003 because of a red card she received in a previous game. The time off has motivated her even more for today's game.

"I made friends with a lot of them this summer in Seattle," Garbin said. "I'm excited to play with them again. We have been working hard lately but need to play a full 90 minutes. If we did that we'd have a lot more wins."

Today's game marks the 10th meeting between the two schools in a series that hasn't yet seen the Ducks defeat the Huskies. They may have their best chance to do so today considering the Huskies (0-14-3) are winless this season.

Washington's record could easily be different if its offense became more productive. The Huskies have lost 10 games by one goal this year, and seven of those losses ended with a score of 1-0.

Oregon senior midfielder



NICOLE BARKER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Andrea Valadez and the Ducks have taken note of Washington's starting roster, which, like Erickson's, features a number of freshmen and underclassmen. As a seasoned veteran, Valadez should have little trouble playing her game against Washington. She hopes that she and her teammates can make big plays in light of the Huskies' inexperience.

"It's definitely a game we can win," Valadez said. "We know a lot about them. They have a lot of inexperience right now. We can relate to them. They are starting a lot of freshmen and hopefully we can capitalize on that."

Valadez and fellow senior Cristian Higa returned to action last weekend against Oregon State after

a three-game hiatus because of an injury. Coping with injuries has been the biggest obstacle this season for the Ducks. Most recently injured was junior midfielder Kate Nelson, who plays a vital role for Oregon on defense. Nelson is still recovering from a concussion suffered against the Beavers.

Oregon concludes its road trip this weekend with a match-up against Washington State on Sunday. The Cougars have had a season similar to Oregon's, with plenty of inconsistency. Kickoff against Washington State is scheduled for noon and action starts today against the Huskies at 7 p.m.

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Oregon midfielder Kate Nelson (15) battles an Oregon State defender on Oct. 21. The Ducks fell to the Beavers 4-2 and will play at Washington tonight at 7 p.m.