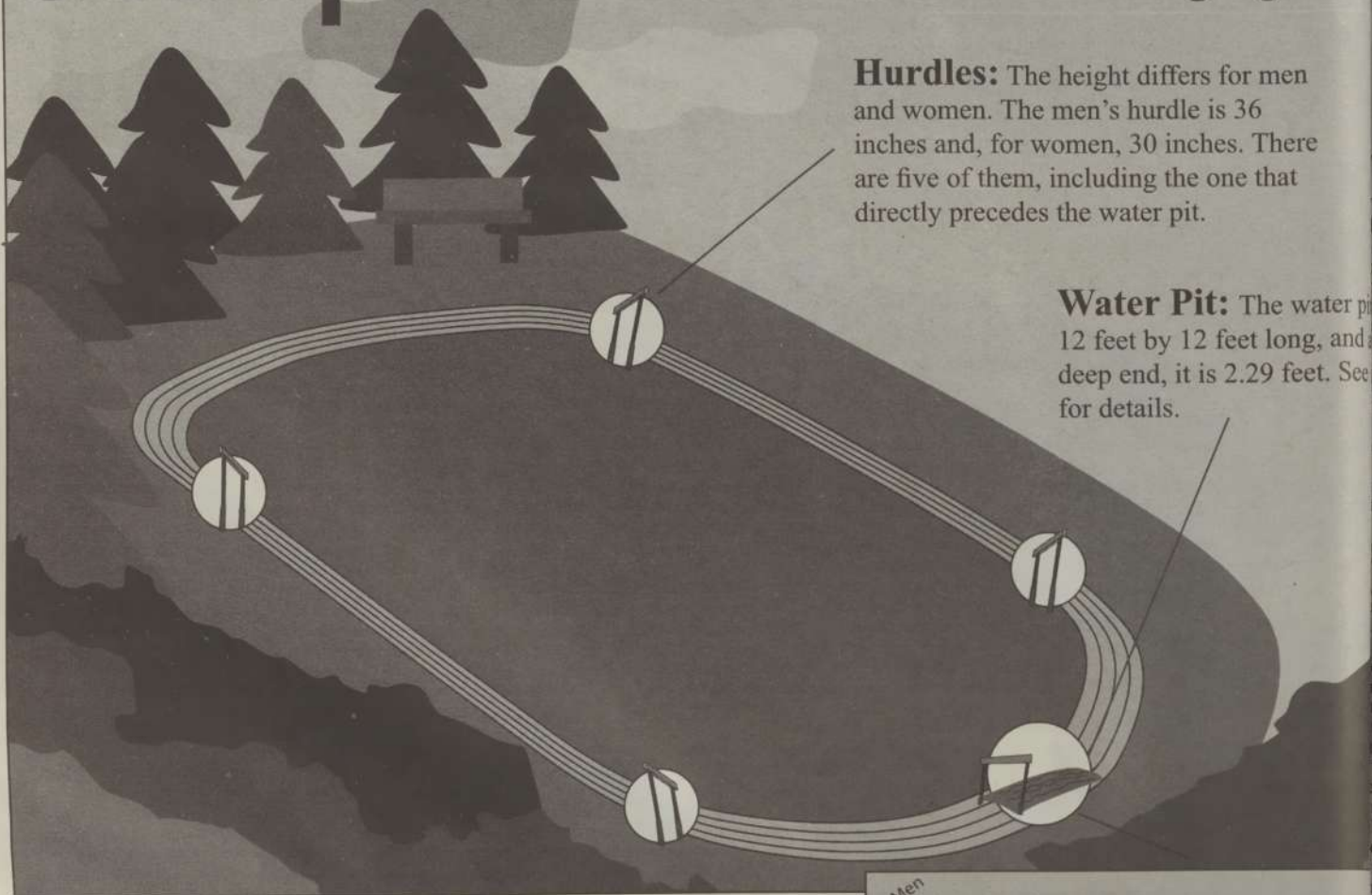


Steeplechase *An insider's guide to the challenging event*



Hurdles: The height differs for men and women. The men's hurdle is 36 inches and, for women, 30 inches. There are five of them, including the one that directly precedes the water pit.

Water Pit: The water pit is 12 feet by 12 feet long, and at its deep end, it is 2.29 feet. See the sidebar for details.

Andrea Simpson
Sports Editor

The event is 3,000 grueling meters of constant speed change, obstacles and a pit of water at frigid temperatures. A domesticated form of cross country, it may be one of the hardest events in the sport of track.

It is the steeplechase.

The length of the race—customarily 3,000 meters—is just less than two miles. The number of laps depends on the placement of the water pit, which is sometimes located on the inside of the lane or on the outside of lanes eight and nine.

Runners encounter 28 barriers as well as seven water jumps. The steeplechase barriers, although they may seem much like hurdles, are in fact much sturdier and will not fall over when hit. The runners often use the top of the barrier as a means of pushing themselves off to gain momentum.

The steeplechase originated in Britain, where athletes would run from one town's steeple to the next. The steeples were plainly visible to runners, making them easy markers. Participants would regularly have to jump over creeks and obstacles they encountered.

Oxford University refined the activity into a sport in 1860, according to the International Association of Athletic Federations

(IAAF).

It was added in the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC) for women merely four years ago.

One Clackamas alumnus has made quite a name for himself in the sport.

Brian Abshire was the United States Olympic Trials Champion in 1988 and went on to compete at the 1988 Games in Seoul, South Korea. He also holds the ninth fastest time for the steeplechase in United States history with a time of eight minutes and 20.83 seconds.

At Clackamas, only two women have participated in the steeplechase since it was added.

Lyndsey McKillip, an alumna who transferred last year, participated in the steeplechase and took first at the Southern Region championships last year. She is now ranked 12th in Division 2 of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Jessica Harper—who did not participate in the steeplechase at Clackamas, as it was not offered at the time she competed—is now ranked eighth in Division 2 of the NCAA.

Karly Osten, a freshman from Gladstone, is primarily a long-

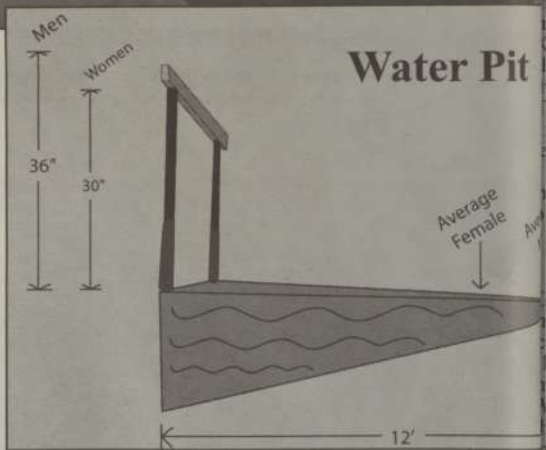


Photo illustrations by Kayla Berge and Andrea Simpson

distance runner. She runs the 5,000 meter and 3,000 length of the steeplechase wasn't anything unusual.

Osten ran in the event for the first time at the Pacific meet May 2.

"She was so nervous that when she was doing the



Photos by Robert Crawford Clackamas Print

Chris Baker, center, and Jared Correll, right, compete in the men's steeplechase event at the Saints and Cavaliers meet April 26.



Jared Correll crouches as he prepares to push off the steeplechase hurdle and jump into the water pit.

ups, she was falling on her head. Head Coach Keoni McHone says she actually did fairly well the first time. It wasn't the best in school history, but I was proud she tried it."

Osten said, "I have had an injury before, so I didn't want to be a flare-up. But I was curious how it was different from other races."

Osten hadn't practiced the steeplechase in its entirety until the meet. She rehearsed the water pit of the race in the sand at the jump pit.

The shock of hitting the water for the first time in the race was an impression on her.

"It was cold!" she said. "I think it would be that you get splashed all the way up and you are soaked by the end of the race."

McHone says that the steeplechase requires more endurance than track events because runners continually adjust their stride to be hard on the body.

"It is more stimulating than running hurdles," Osten said. "It's more like cross country with jumps and the water."