

Rebekah Noble (#195) will defend her
NCAA championship in Sacramento



Geoff Thurner

Fleet of Feet

Noble and Rupp raring to run in Sacramento

BY STEPHANIE LOH

The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games are only a little more than a year away, Eugene is getting ready to host the 2007 Olympic Track and Field Trials at historic Hayward Field in June next year, the UO men's track team has just been crowned Pacific-10 Conference champions, and the Ducks are now gearing up to compete in the NCAA Outdoor Championships in Sacramento, Calif.

It's a good time to be a runner in Track Town USA.

And for Oregon distance phenoms Galen Rupp and Rebekah Noble, this week's championship meet is only the beginning of a long, drawn-out process that they hope will culminate in Beijing next August.

Noble, a sophomore, returns to the NCAA Championships this year as the defending champion in the 800 meter, her pet event that she won as a freshman last year.

Despite finishing second to California sophomore Alysia Johnson at the West Regional Championships two weeks ago, Noble, a Spokane, Wash., native, was not discouraged by her own performance in that race.

"We had to qualify for nationals, and that's what we did, running 2:04 off a pretty tired week," Noble said. "Going into nationals, this is what we like to do: train through the week, keep fitness great, and have people PR'ing when they're supposed to.

"So I have my confidence in that. Last year I (set a personal record) at nationals, so maybe I'll PR again at nationals this year."

Noble set a personal best of 2:02.07 last year en route to becoming the first collegiate freshman to win the NCAA outdoors 800-meter national title.

That set the bar pretty high going into this year, but Noble is not unduly worried about raised expectations or external pressures, and says she's just looking forward to defending her title.

"It's not really that different this year," Noble said. "I've spoken to my mom and a lot of people about how I really don't have anything to lose because I'm a national champion already and no one can take that away.

"So whatever happens this year, I won't be sad or discouraged if I get second or third maybe. Who knows where I'll end up? But at the end of that race, you just gotta take what you got out of it and put those in positive."

Noble also intends to set her sights on a national team spot to compete in the Olympics next year.

"What the goal is for Rebekah Noble is to have the best shot to represent herself and the University of Oregon at the 2008 Olympic Trials, and to make the (United States) Olympic team in Beijing," Oregon Director of Track and Field Vin Lananna said.

**'I'm a national champion
already and no one can
take that away!' – Rebekah Noble**