

The Emerald Media Group Presents

# Duck Season

May 2022



## TRACK TOWN TRIUMPHS

Ducks dash through  
spring season



# Duck Season

2022

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# IZZY THORNTON-BOTT

## HOW SHE FOUND COMFORT IN HER TIME AWAY FROM RUNNING

BY AARON HEISEN · TWITTER @AARON\_HEISEN



*(Courtesy of Kevin Neri)*

Izzy Thornton-Bott's experience overcoming a past illness helped her cope with the four-month recovery she would need after sustaining a stress fracture during cross-country season.

She felt a slight twinge in her left shin, but thought little of it.

Nothing out of the ordinary for a seasoned collegiate distance runner.

An hour later, though, Izzy Thornton-Bott couldn't stand up.

She began to worry it might be more than a twinge.

After a win in the 6,000-meter at the Dellinger Invitational, her track career at Oregon was off to a budding start. The injury—which came days after—would force Thornton-Bott to spend four months away from the track.

"News as devastating as that, I would be lying if I said it was all fine," Thornton-Bott said. "I'd come [to Or-

egon] to be a part of the team. And I started making good friendships with the team, and then suddenly, I'm out. I'm stuck in the pool for eight weeks."

While it was tough at times, Thornton-Bott's track career had been stunted before. Therefore, when she learned that she had sustained a stress fracture in her left shin, she was far from daunted.

Instead of wallowing, that four month recovery process helped remind her there's more to life than running track.

Throughout those four months, she cheered her fellow teammates on from the sidelines. She committed herself to

growing internally. She dedicated herself to her love for photography and reading.

Thornton-Bott came to the University of Oregon from Australia to compete for one of the most prestigious track teams in the nation and gain exposure so she could compete in the 2024 Olympics.

Following the stress fracture, those goals were merely put on pause.

It wasn't all that dissimilar from the journey she embarked on to save her track career before even coming to Oregon. A journey that makes any of her other challenges seem minuscule in comparison.

In August 2019, Thornton-Bott traveled from her home country of

(Courtesy of Kevin Neri)



Australia to Ontario, Canada for a six-month exchange program at the University of Waterloo.

She arrived with no plans of joining its track program. At first, she trained individually. She put an emphasis on relaxation, her studies and the enjoyment of her social life.

Thornton-Bott surrounded herself with non-athletes, jumping at any chance to travel or explore new hobbies such as photography and knitting.

For the first time in her life, track was not the most important thing.

"I could do things that are just fun for the sake of doing them for fun," Thornton-Bott said. "I could actually have more to me than 'Izzy, the athlete.' I could be 'Izzy, the friend.'"

Shortly after, Thornton-Bott learned she was eligible to try out for the team and earned her spot completing a time trial.

At Waterloo, she was named the Ontario University Athletics Rookie of the Year after a fifth-place finish in the 8,000-meters race at the OUA Championship.

When the six-month exchange program ended in December, she returned home to Australia to prepare for the next step in her budding track career.

Then, life happened.

Thornton-Bott's liver completely shut down.

She was diagnosed with an acute granular fever — a.k.a. mononucleosis.

Prior to the diagnosis, she was at the peak of her powers. To return to that point, an arduous road lay ahead.

"I think the hardest thing as an ath-

lete is when you get ill or when you get injured; it's not the fact that you've hurt a part of your body," Thornton-Bott said. "It's the fact that it's preventing you from running. It's working against you."

Thornton-Bott tried to return multiple times, but her body was not ready to push the limits. She lost an immense amount of weight; she endured recurring leg injuries, and she went from one of the fastest girls on her team to struggling to keep up with her youngest teammates.

The simplest of drills became almost impossible. Some days, she struggled to get out of bed and go to workouts.

She was reduced to solely training on the exercise bike.

"I remember being on the bike, and it was maybe the third time going back," Thornton-Bott said. "I went 'Ah. Fuck this.' and got off."

Calling it quits on her track career was never an option. She decided to take a full season off to regain her health and strength, instead of trying to train through the illness.

Thornton-Bott's choice to put her athletics on the backburner ultimately helped prolong her future.

Before taking that hiatus, she had reached out to Oregon distance coach Helen Lehman-Winters and had shown interest in the University of Oregon as the place to pursue her goals of competing at the collegiate level. After beating the illness, she began the process of joining the Ducks' program.

"Izzy expressed a really strong interest in coming to America, not just to go to any school, but to come to Oregon,"

coach Lehman-Winters said. "A lot of athletes want that interest to be one-way; they want all the attention. Izzy was truly interested in going through the process to get here. She was committed to coming here all along."

Her track career was moving in the right direction once again.

She won her first collegiate race and she began to build friendships with her fellow Oregon track teammates.

A week later, Thornton-Bott and her teammates were on a leisurely run at Eugene's Mount Pisgah when she sustained the stress fracture. With the Nuttycombe Invitational in Madison, Wisconsin, right around the corner, she decided to cut her run short out of caution.

She returned to the mountain's car park to sit and rest. As her teammates came down to the mountain to check on her, Thornton-Bott tried to get up and greet them.

Suddenly, her leg gave out.

Right as she was finding her footing again, it was swept out from under her. Her track career was derailed, once again.

"I knew that if I could get through how ill I was and still be kind enough to myself, then I can get through just about anything," Thornton-Bott said. "That mentality definitely helped out a lot when it came to the fracture."

Her injuries and illness weren't exactly blessings in disguise. However, her instinct to stay true to the future of her track career while it was on pause prepared her for any obstacles that may present themselves down the line.

*The Daily Emerald Presents*

# Asking for a Friend

Asking for a Friend is the Daily Emerald's sex and relationship column. Every other week, Aisha Ghorashian answers anonymous questions about anything from how to date, to sex, to how to heal a broken heart.

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# **ALYSAH HICKEY LOOKS TO BUILD OFF SCHOOL RECORD LONG JUMP**

The sophomore jumper is ready to compete after breaking the indoor record in January.

BY MOJO HILL · **TWITTER** @MOJOHILL22



*(Courtesy of Kevin Neri)*

Alysah Hickey just keeps getting better.

She broke her personal long jump record last year as a freshman, but that wasn't enough. The Pac-12 women's Freshman of the Year went on to set an all-time University of Oregon record this indoor season. She's come out to a strong start in running and jumping events during outdoor season as well. But she isn't satisfied.

"It makes me happy that there are still things to fix because I know I can get progressively better," Hickey said. "There's a lot to do and there's a lot of time, so I'm very excited about what's to come."

As a freshman, she set a personal best of 21 feet, 7 1/2 inches in long jump, which was the 10th-highest mark in the NCAA. She was the fifth jumper in Oregon history to win a long jump Pac-12 title.

"A thing that a lot of people don't realize is that Hickey is a freshman," Oregon head coach Robert Johnson said last May. "She has a lot of years to go, and I think there are a lot of things she can work on and still improve."

She wasted no time in showing that improvement. In January's Razorback Invitational, which included the first long jump event of 2022, she set the indoor school record. She posted a distance of 21 feet, 10 1/4 inches, starting her season with a first-place finish.

"It felt so good, especially to have my teammates out there," Hickey said. "It really helps me. This was really redemption for me. I love coming to Arkansas, and I want to come here and execute."

She added that she hoped her mark would be 22 feet, which only leaves her with more room to improve. Last May, she jumped 22 feet, 4 1/4 inches in the Division 1 West Preliminary Round, which placed third. Her performance in the Division 1 Championships last June wasn't as strong, as she fell to fifth with a 21-foot, 4-inch mark. The season-opening record jump got her back on track.

"A big thing for me this indoor season is staying consistent," Hickey said. "If anything, staying in the 21s as consistently as I can, and pop a 22 every once in a while would be awesome, but we're making our way there. We're building up."

She opened the Razorback Invitational with a 21-foot, 8-inch jump, just

under her eventual record. She said she liked the bouncy runway and that it helped increase her adrenaline in the event.

"For me, I always have the most adrenaline in the beginning," Hickey said. "Popping off that jump early was honestly not surprising for me. I felt really good, and when I have that sort of adrenaline, it pushes me down the runway."

While Hickey didn't quite match her record jump during the rest of the indoor season, she came close with a mark of 21 feet, 5 1/4 inches at the Indoor Track & Field Championships in March. That placed fourth in the competition.

She's built off her long jump performance to fuel her efforts in other events as well. She's a strong runner, having placed third in both the 100 and 4x100 in March's Aztec Invitational.

"Speed is something that's an advantage for me, so I definitely utilize that as much as I can," Hickey said.

In April's Hayward Premiere, Hickey finished second in the 4x100 and sixth in the 100. Most recently, she posted another 21-foot, 8-inch long jump in the Mt. SAC Relays.

The Women of Oregon own the highest Rating Index in the West by a whopping margin, with 985.74 points compared to second-place USC's 537.75.

"Our group is a great group," Hickey said. "We all get along super well, and the energy is great. There's

never bad blood. We're always pushing each other. She jumps this; I want to jump further. She wants to do the same exact thing... Everyone gets hyped for one another. We're all trying to beat each other."

While Hickey's sights are still set on improving her long jump performance, she wants to work on running as well. Last Wednesday, Coach Johnson said Hickey was someone who might compete in other events besides long jump to help the team scratch out more points. For Hickey, it's just about constantly improving.

"I'm a long jumper. I want to jump," she said. "But I'm also someone who believes in building up and progress, and I need more practices. If that's what can get me there, then I'm totally fine with keeping me off my legs and not doing as many jumps and everything. For me, it's all about getting the ground work done."

Hickey came in first in May's Pac-12 Championships with a 21-foot, 0.5-inch long jump. It was Hickey's second Pac-12 title.

"I'm excited. I'm ready to do this," Hickey said. "I'm someone that actively talks to myself when I'm out there on the runway. It helps me. I'm motivating myself and getting motivation from others. And honestly, I'm really excited to go out there and see what I can do."



Alysah Hickey and Ella Clayton leading in the second heat during the second day of the Hayward Premiere track meet hosted at Hayward Field on April 2, 2021. (Liam Sherry/Emerald)



(Courtesy of Kevin Neri)

# WHO SAYS HOME-GROWN CAN'T BE WORLD-CLASS?

BY GABRIEL MARVIN

In 2021, Oregon redshirt freshman Micah Williams became the first ever sprinter from Oregon to make an Olympic team while still competing for the Ducks. The success hasn't stopped there.

Oregon native and redshirt freshman sprinter Micah Williams didn't envision becoming an Olympian and NCAA national champion before turning 20 as he headed into his freshman season.

The 5-foot-9 speedster from Portland exceeded even his own expectations with some of the times and accomplishments he achieved in his first season with Oregon.

"I just had to have goals that were reasonable for me at the time," Williams said. "And I just over did it. I ended up demolishing my goals which I think was very good for me."

Before crushing records with the Ducks, Williams was a standout at Benson Polytechnic High School on the track and in the classroom. He

ranked No. 6 nationally among track and field athletes and carried a 4.0 GPA during his time at Benson.

From age 11 through high school, coach Leon Mckenzie has seen every step of his maturation and is someone that Williams describes as a "father figure."

"He's always had a really strong belief and confidence in himself," Mckenzie said. "He's strictly a warrior."

Williams mentioned that a huge reason for his success is his mother Andrea Green, who's a personal trainer, and his grandmother Janette Green, who's an amazing cook.

He said that if not for his mother and grandmother, he'd still be eating like a middle-schooler.

Williams was named Gatorade

Oregon Boys Track and Field Athlete of the year for three consecutive years, becoming the first athlete in Oregon state history to win the award more than twice.

He knew the high school accolades wouldn't guarantee similar success at the DI level.

"I tried to just come into college and not be too into myself," Williams said.

Though it is his home state, deciding on Oregon coming out of high school wasn't as sure-fire as some might expect.

He included LSU, UCLA and USC in his final four choices but ultimately decided to stay in his home state. It was a move Williams said is rare for a kid who attended a public

high school in the Portland area — to grow up in Oregon and sign with the historic program.

"I kind of wanted to get out because I hate the cold weather. But honestly, Oregon's just like Track Town, USA, so it was kind of hard to not count them in," Williams said. "In reality they were still in the back of my head."

His freshman season with the Ducks began with a bang, literally and figuratively.

When the gun went off in his first ever collegiate race, Williams handily took first in the 60 meter dash prelims (6.63) and final heat (6.56) at the Razorback Invitational.

From that point on, track and field fans began to realize that Williams had the potential for a historic career with the Ducks.

He solidified his prowess in the 60 meters at the 2021 NCAA Indoor Championships, where he was crowned national champion after matching his career best time of 6.49. He'd eventually improve his personal best to 6.48 in the first meet of his sophomore year.

Williams won eight out of 11 finals heats between indoor and outdoor meets during his first season, the others being a second place finish, a disqualification and third place in the 100-meter dash (10.11) at 2021 NCAA outdoor championships.

The success didn't stop for Williams when the collegiate season ended. He secured a spot on the Team U.S.A. relay pool after finishing fifth in the 100 meters at the Olympic Trials. Crossing the finish line at 9.91 — the fastest time in Oregon history as well as the fifth fastest 100 meter time in NCAA history.

After the race ended, fans caught



a glimpse of Williams' personality as he celebrated his time as if he just won Olympic gold.

"Making an Olympic team is something we had talked about years prior to that," McKenzie said.

He ecstatically jumped and shouted after seeing his time on the scoreboard, realizing he'd be heading to Tokyo.

"I usually don't show emotion. But I've been saying since eighth grade that I wanted to go to the Olympics, so it was a great feeling," Williams told the Portland Tribune. "Not many Portland inner-city kids go to the Olympics. I just felt like I was ready."

Williams qualified for Tokyo as part of the 4x100 meter relay team, but with more experienced sprinters like Trayvon Bromell, Fred Kerley, Ronnie Baker and Cravon Gillespie already set as the team, Williams took more of a support role in his first Olympic games.

"I didn't feel disappointed at all. I was actually happy, but I wasn't satisfied," Williams said of his first Olympics.

Williams' 2022 season was going according to plan. He hadn't lost a single indoor race all season. Then came the NCAA Indoor Championship on March 11.

There came every sprinter's worst nightmare: a false start. An automatic

disqualification.

The immediate disappointment was clear as he buried his face into his hands, but his response less than a month after is a testament to the type of person he is.

"I actually learned from it so that was a good thing," Williams said. "That's out of my head now. I'm just using it as motivation now."

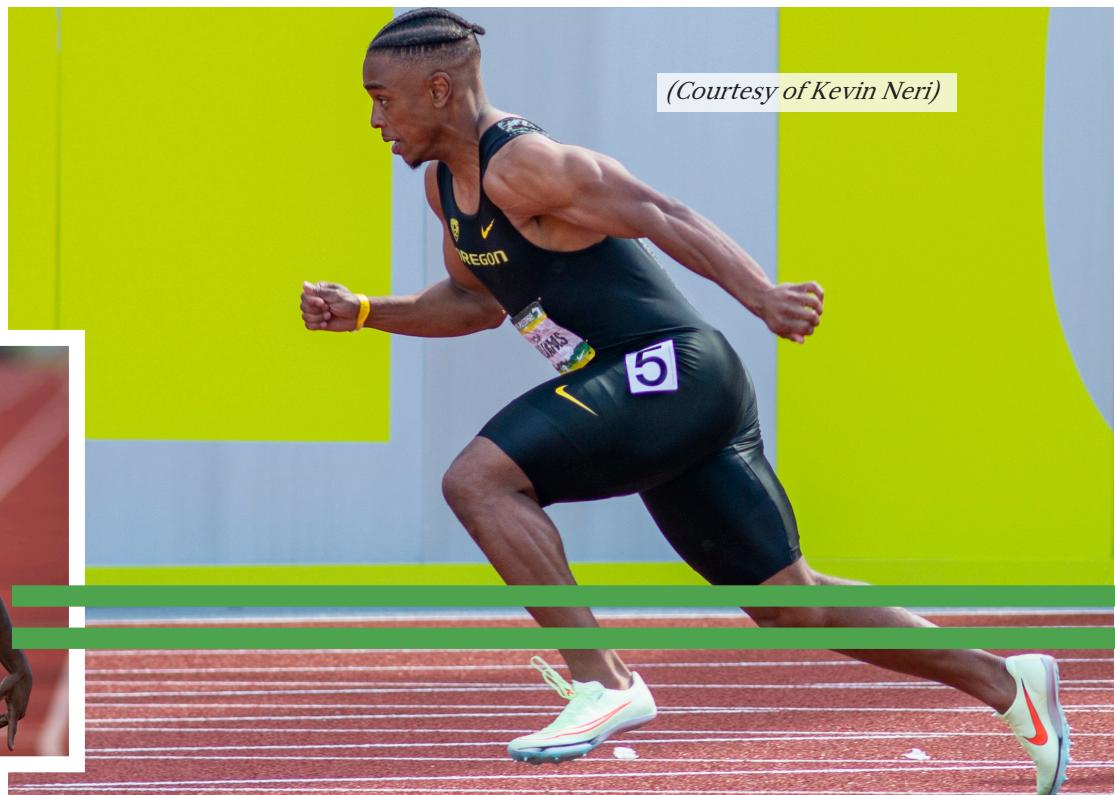
It worked. He's finished first in every finals race he's run since the false start. Including the 62nd Mt. Sac Invitational where he dropped a then world-leading but wind-impacted 9.83 in the 100 meters.

At the 2022 Pac-12 Outdoor Championships he won the 100 meter and 200 meter finals in 9.93 and 20.05 — avenging his second place finish in the 100 meter dash at the same meet last year.

As the season comes to a close, Williams has more-than proved to the track and field world that he is here to stay and is also someone that requires attention in every race he's in.

With all these achievements coming so quickly it begs the question, "What's next?"

Williams could achieve his lifelong goal of Olympic gold two years from now in the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics. It's lofty but not out of the question; fans will just wave to wait and see.



(Courtesy of Kevin Neri)



Athletes compete in the women's 100 meter hurdles. The University of Oregon hosts the final day of the Pac-12 Track and Field Championships on May 15, 2022 at Hayward Field. (Molly McPherson/Emerald)

# **LOOKING BACK** **AT THE HISTORY OF THE** **WORLD ATHLETICS** **CHAMPIONSHIPS**



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# For the first time on American soil, the Worlds are coming to Eugene.

BY JACOB HAMRE

For the first time ever, the World Athletics Championships are coming to the United States. Choosing the perfect location for this accolade was no easy task. Eugene, Oregon, otherwise known as Tracktown U.S.A., was picked to host the event that starts on July 15.

The World Athletic Championships are usually biennial but were postponed in 2021. The event is run by World Athletics, formerly known as the International Amateur Athletic Federation, and was made in response to the 50 kilometer walk being removed from the Olympics in 1976. It has become one of the most important track and field events in the world with 32 world records being set at the competition over the years.

The first World Championships were held in 1983 after being approved in 1976. The first event was held in Helsinki, Finland. Since then, there have been 17 events with the 18th coming in 2022.

The previous World competition in 2019 took place in Qatar. It was the first time ever being held in the

Middle East, and there were indeed some issues — a lack of spectators, a flat atmosphere and warm conditions made for a challenging setting. Surprisingly, World Athletics President Sebastian Coe called it the best Championships in history.

The 2022 World Championships will be held at the newly renovated Hayward Field. Khalifa International Stadium was the home to the event in 2019 and has the capacity to hold just over 45,000 people. Hayward on the other hand can only hold up to 25,000 at max capacity. There will be about 2,000 athletes coming to the event along with other staff and fans expected to overflow the city of Eugene.

Most nearby hotels are already out of rooms during the 10-day event while final-touch renovations are still being added to compensate. The renovations at Hayward Field started in 2018 and took their final shape in the fall of 2020. Donations by the Knight family and other donors helped fund the project in hopes to make Hayward Field one of the most prestigious track and

field venues in the country, costing over \$270 million dollars along the way.

Adding more space for the expected large crowd is only one of the things different about the new stadium. Updated locker rooms, training rooms, a new nine-lane track, a practice area and other additions were all incorporated during the two-year renovation process.

The inaugural event in 1983 had 41 events and lasted a week. Since then, eight events have been added with an additional three more days to correspond. The 2022 event is also expected to have 53 more nations than the first one, up to 207.

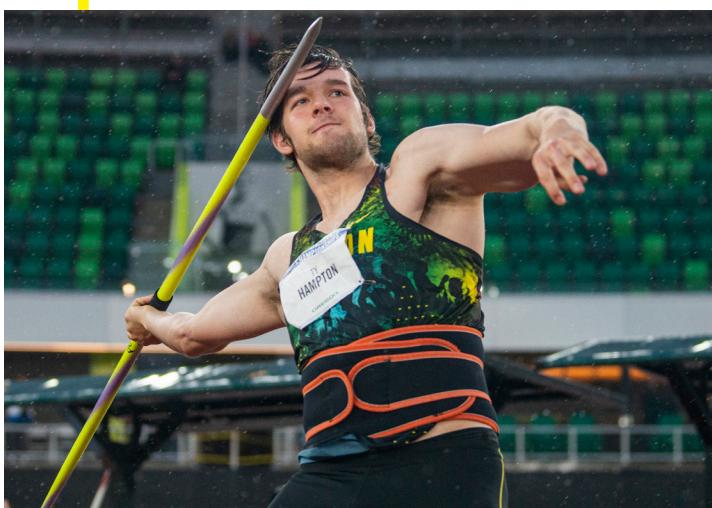
Out of the 17 championships, the United States has won 13 and aims to become the first country to win the event on home soil. Eight of the last nine have been won by the Americans with Kenya being the only other champion, winning in 2015. Whoever ends up winning the overall team event will be rewarded with a team event trophy, a newly added piece of silverware that was announced in March.

*The Oregon Ducks celebrate after winning the championship. The University of Oregon hosts the final day of the Pac-12 Track and Field Championships on May 15, 2022 at Hayward Field. (Molly McPherson/Emerald)*



# TY HAMPTON CAPTURES PAC-12 CHAMPIONSHIP IN JAVELIN

Hampton and the No. 1 Ducks Javelin squad add to their outstanding season.

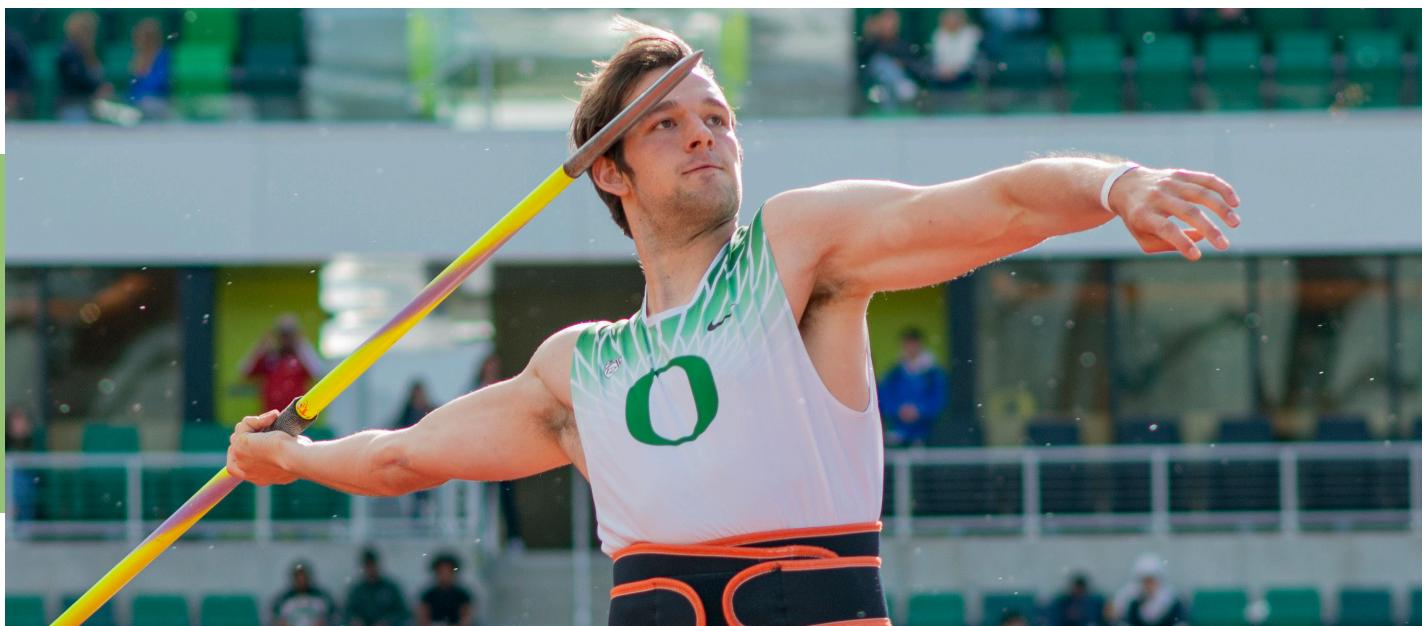


*(Courtesy of Kevin Neri)*

BY BEN BARRETT



*(Courtesy of Kevin Neri)*



*(Courtesy of Kevin Neri)*



(Courtesy of Kevin Neri)

Ty Hampton, a redshirt sophomore from the Oregon coast, dominated the field en route to a Pac-12 championship in the Javelin May 13 at Hayward Field.

Conditions were far from ideal as rain poured down throughout the entirety of the event.

But Hampton felt right at home with the weather.

"I'm from the south coast, so it did rain a lot more than this," Hampton said. "This is pretty standard."

Hampton's win puts another stamp on the resume of the No. 1 ranked Oregon Javelin squad. The Ducks have been on a tear this season behind Hampton's stellar performances.

However, the success of the squad is not only due to Hampton's exceptional play. Hampton credited his teammates for motivating him to

become a better overall athlete.

"We all feed off each other," Hampton said. "It's a very cohesive dynamic. I can't ask for anything better."

**"I'VE BEEN  
WAITING FOR  
MY MOMENT."**

**TY HAMPTON**  
*UO sophomore*

Hampton's teammates Eric Lyon, Dalton Rasmussen and Asher Krauel each finished within the top seven in the Pac-12 Championship event,

picking up a total of 22 points for the Ducks.

The win was especially meaningful for Hampton due to his battle with injuries over the past year. Hampton dealt with disc bulge in his L4 and L5 last season.

"It just feels good to be healthy for once," Hampton said. "I've been waiting for my moment."

Hampton's college career has been limited due to a combination of injury and COVID-19 protocol preventing him from competing.

However, his moment is finally here and he is taking full advantage, already cementing himself as one of the top Javelin athletes in the nation.

Hampton will look to keep his momentum as the season inches closer to the Track and Field National Championships in early June.

# THE FUTURE OF THE DISTANCE DYNASTY FOR OREGON TRACK

BY ELLIOTT DEINS

Competing in distance as a Duck means Evan Holland is running in the shoes of legends.

The longstanding legacy left by the likes of Oregon greats Steve Prefontaine and Kenny Moore, as well as the new wave of dominance from Cooper Teare and Cole Hocker, could be a lot to live up to. Redshirt freshman and Oregonian Evan Holland looks to be next in line to capture greatness.

As a high schooler, Holland was dominant. He never finished lower than fifth in the Oregon School Activities Association 5A Cross Country State Championships. He won the 5 kilometer race as a junior and set the state record (14 minutes and 30.4 seconds) his senior year. He also won the track state championships in the 1500 meter and 3000 meter as a junior and senior.

After an impressive high school career, he received offers from multiple marquee programs. As a budding distance runner, Oregon was the clear choice. The historic success lured Holland in. It was his dream.

The University of Oregon was where he wanted to be, a place he could develop as a person, athlete and student. Holland's father Neil was his coach throughout high school. Holland's parents still attend every race they can and cheer from the stands.

"It's more of a supervising role now," Holland said about his father's involvement. "If I have a big workout, he'll help time me and stuff. He's still in a supportive role."

A typical training week for Holland consists of 60-65 miles of running. Impressive numbers, but not earth-shattering by distance runners' standards.

"It's nothing major," Holland said. "A happy medium, I just try to get consistent weeks. I'm not a big mileage guy."

Holland's training runs are alongside Olympian Hocker and World Championship qualifier Teare. Although no longer Ducks, Hocker and Teare are still coached by Ben Thomas.

"We all train together every day," Holland said about Hocker and Teare. "We're all good friends who are helping each other. Racing with them is a pretty cool experience."

Balancing training with school can be difficult for any athlete. Holland is studying spatial data science and technology. He's just started his first round of major-specific classes this term and said he is having a blast.

Holland likes to relax and blow off steam, like most other

college students, by playing video games.

"Rainbow Six Siege and Forza are in my rotation right now," Holland said. "I play Rainbow Six with some of the guys on the team, and then Forza when I want to zone out."

A classic car guy, Holland's favorite car to race with is the original Ford GT. It's also his dream car if he becomes a millionaire.

Holland is trying to get his feet back underneath him after a self proclaimed rough year, even though he became a member of the sub-four-minute mile club in Feb. 2021. He is one of only 26 others to do that in school history.

He is trying to take advantage of every race he can. Holland improved his personal best in the 5000 meter (14:27.05), and the 1500 (3:42.52) in April. These times are fast enough to qualify for regionals later this year in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

"I have some fairly ambitious goals," Holland said.

He hopes to continue focusing on getting the work done each day and controlling what he can.



(Courtesy of Kevin Neri)

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