

Oregon Weekend – April 23, 2005

1. Eugene

At the Oregon Invitational in Eugene, Chris Winter had his first real test on the track this year and came through with flying colours. Running in the morning section of the men's 1500m Chris ran a personal best 3:52.66 placing 5th. "I would have done even better had I not gotten boxed on the last lap" explained Winter, clearly frustrated with the experience. "I even asked politely to the guy ahead to move aside and let me through, but he would have no part of it. The frustrating part was how great I felt and I was closing fast on the leaders then I got stalled. By the time I gently used my elbows and got through they opened up too much of a gap. Still I'm pumped to run so fast off basically my strength and endurance." Winter has a busy schedule ahead of him as he prepares to defend in July his Canadian Junior Steeplechase title and gain a berth on the Canadian Pan-Am Junior team competing at the Pan-Ams in Windsor.

2. Gresham

13 NorWester athletes made the trek on Friday down to Gresham Oregon, just outside of Portland. Leaving behind the warmth and blue skies of the North Shore and heading into raging rain and wind, ominous thoughts went through each of our team's mind as Oregon drew nearer. However, on the outskirts of Portland the skies opened up near dusk revealing scintillating colours both in the skies and the green trees and shrubs along the highway. The highlight of this transformation was a beautiful rainbow that seemed to tell the athletes not to worry you would do well tomorrow.

The objective of the trip was a weekend of competition, inspiration and good fellowship. Group trips are the most successful means of bonding teams and fostering friendship and good sportsmanship. That's why NorWesters goes out of its way to ensure we have one good track trip and another cross-country trip each year. The results of our athletes in Gresham seem to be proof that things work out for the better on group trips. Along with the 13 athletes making the trip to Gresham were several parents and coach Thelma Wright who had her hands full making sure things ran smoothly for the athletes and that each athlete received deserved attention prior to and following their races.

Of the distance athletes, outstanding efforts were turned in by Jessica Smith who dominated her section of the 1500m winning in 5:05.12; Kyle Clegg who ran a season PB in the 1500m in 4:21.62 then came back to run the 800m with Mikey Adair. It was interesting that two opposite strategies came together at the finish line. Kyle went out hard and led or was close to the lead for the first 600m, whereas Mikey went out slowly in last place until the 600m where he unleashed a furious kick and out leaned Kyle at the tape in 2:06.36 to 2:06.46. Brenden Rosser blew everyone away in his section of the 3000m winning section 2 in 9:11.01. Brenden boldly chose to lead the race from 200m out in a very commanding fashion. In the evening showcase girl's 800m Chantelle was 6th in 2:17.09 followed by Ali in 2:19.66. All the other distance athletes who went down came away winners by doing the little things that made their performances remarkable. Although Hayley Spurr gamely started her 3000m, her strained hamstring gave out early on and she had to forfeit; however, that did not diminish her enthusiasm for cheering everyone on in their races. Adam Wasylyshyn set a PB of 4:40.11 in his 1500m, as did Lauren Slattery (11:22.26) and Emily Farnan (10:55.28) in the 3000m. Stacey Dennis coming off 10 months of injury to test the waters ran 5:27.21 in her 1500m and Gillian Wright who also has been battling injuries ran 2:28.3 in the 800m. One of the trip highlights was our girl's 4x400m relay team. The team of Gillian, Jessica, Chantelle and Ali placed 2nd in their heat but further analysis showed they actually placed 6th overall out of 27 teams. Congratulations girls and 5th team member Lauren who was ready to step in if necessary and was as excited as everyone else at the team's performance.

We also sent one sprinter, Kevin Lim who was testing the waters in his first major competition of the year. After winning his heats in the 400m (51.34) and 200m (23.38) preliminaries, Kevin started the 200m final but felt that dreaded 'twinge' and wisely shut it down and focused on the 400m where he came 3rd in 51.19.

The weekend was truly a great display of teamwork. Congratulations to every athlete who made the commitment to go to Gresham and then follow up on that commitment with sterling performances. Also thanks to Neil Clegg, Don Adair, and Thelma for driving our crew down and looking after them. Also Kathy Smith was influential in keeping things on track, cheering the athletes on and helping wherever. With all the success, despite inclement weather and a long drive it was unanimous that this meet is worth the effort and will be on the schedule for 2006.