

Pre, Ducks capture NCAA titles

SPOKANE — Steve Prefontaine and a pair of peccolous freshmen who may some day replace him Monday carried the University of Oregon to the 1973 NCAA cross country championship, the second in three years for the Ducks.

For Pre, who outdueled Briton Nick Rose of Western Kentucky in the last mile in front of a crowd of almost 2,000 on this sunny but chilly day, it was his third individual cross country championship.

Prefontaine trailed Rose by 50 yards at the three-mile mark and didn't move until slightly more than a mile remained. As the two runners crossed the meadow portion of the Hangman Valley Golf Course, Pre quickly made up a 30-yard deficit.

THE RUNNERS were now in

sight of the crowd as they came down a long chute.

"I suddenly felt my chest go tight," said Rose, a sophomore, and the Eastern champion. "I heard the crowd cheering for Pre and I had to let him go.

"Pre held together, that's all there was to it."

There was no time available for Pre or Rose for the six-mile test that was started by 22 runners.

Although Pre was well ahead of his teammates, the other Ducks did their jobs, especially freshmen Terry Williams and David Taylor.

IT WAS Washington State's pre-race plan to stick their men with certain Ducks. Dave Harter and Dean Clark of WSU were to run with Randy James, normally Oregon's No. 2 man.

But, on race day, it was all

Oregon. The Ducks totaled 97 points, fewer than any other team although the team results were still unofficial.

Williams, the schoolboy sensation who defeated the Russian juniors at 10,000 meters last summer in Moscow, finished 18th overall and then came Taylor, a freshman from Merced, Calif., who was 23rd.

James charged home for 24th and Gary Barger, the sophomore miler, was 31st.

That grouping was decisive for the Ducks, as it had been in the Northern Division and the Pac-8 races.

Not only did Clark or Harper finish up with James, but the Cougars' John Ngeno faded badly after 2½ miles.

Although the coaches had feared snow, the day was surprisingly pleasant in Spokane. The sun was

bright and the temperature was 35 degrees when the race began.

THE COURSE was very firm and Bill Dellinger, the Oregon Coach, said "it definitely was the fastest course we've run on this year."

For Pre, the victory was his third NCAA cross country title. It was fitting that his incredible college career should so end.

Pre won the titles at Williamsburg, Va., in 1970 and at Knoxville, Tenn., in 1971 when the Ducks upset Washington State for the team title.

Only as a freshman did Pre taste defeat. In fact, his third-place finish in 1969, in New York, to Gerry Lindgren and Mike Ryan of Air Force is the only NCAA event — track or cross country — he has failed to win.

Only Lindgren had won three titles before today.



PRE'S THIRD TITLE