

Just a kid from Eugene

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Oregon’s Jackson Mestler advances on to the Olympic Trials steeplechase final, set to take place on Friday. Photo by Matt Parker

By Caela Fenton and Kate Walkup

On the final day to qualify for the Olympic Trials, Eugene native and University of Oregon athlete Jackson Mestler took one more shot at the 3,000m steeplechase during a last-minute time trial at Hayward Field.

He is now preparing for his first Olympic Trials final and a chance to make the U.S. Olympic Team.

Mestler’s qualifying round was dramatic to say the least. With about 200m to go, he found himself in seventh place, just outside the top-five automatic-qualifying spots.

Then the steeplechase did its thing, and all of a sudden, two runners had wiped out in the final water jump, giving Mestler the opportunity to extend his Trials experience a little longer. Mestler finished his heat in fifth place, clocking 8:33.09.

In his post-race interview, Mestler clearly did not take pleasure in his competitors taking spills, even though it aided his own race.

“It’s a bummer that, you know, I was in seventh with 200 left and then two guys fell in front of me,” Mestler said. “But, that’s the nature of what can happen and I’m glad I took advantage of the opportunity and stayed on my feet.”

He later encapsulated the steeplechase in more explicit language, “Sh*t happens sometimes,” he chuckled.

This perhaps may be something he learned from his father, a four-time all American in the steeplechase between 1988-92, who competed in the 1996 and 2000 Olympic Trials.

Mestler—born and raised a Duck—has one more race wearing an Oregon uniform at Hayward field. Parents Rick and Jill Mestler both ran for Oregon, younger sister Caramia Mestler is a current member of the team and younger brother Vincent Mestler will be an incoming freshman for the Ducks in the fall.

The Mestlers are an intrinsic part of the Eugene running community. Jill has run the Oregon All-Comers meets since 2005, and all the Mestler kids grew up volunteering at meets at Hayward and other local races.

The race was bound to be a tough one no matter what, with the afternoon temperature in Eugene sitting at 94 degrees.

“Water,” Mestler joked when asked about his strategy for staying cool pre-race. “And then when that dried off, I got more water and dumped it on myself. And then I got colder water and dumped that on myself again.”

At the Pac-12 Championships earlier this year, Mestler won the steeplechase. At the NCAA Championships just a week before Trials, Mestler just missed the qualifying spot for the finals. Just four days after he thought his season was over, Mestler toed the line for one more chance to qualify for the Olympic Trials and follow in his father’s footsteps.

“Rest. Hydrate. Repeat,” Mestler said in regards to preparing for Friday. “We’ll be ready. Five days is plenty of time.”



Photo by Matt Parker

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