

# Running commentary

By **Charlie Kanzig**  
Correspondent

Veteran athletes and young guns will represent the U.S. at the Olympics in track and field.

The Olympic trials for track and field concluded Sunday, July 10, in Eugene, following 10 days of intense competition to determine the representatives for the U.S. in Rio next month.

When it was all said and done, some veterans prevailed as champions, but there were plenty of young guns who made their mark as well. Additionally, a boatload of athletes with Oregon ties qualified for the Olympic Games.

My favorite of the “old-timers,” Bernard Lagat, uncorked a 52.8-second final lap to win the 5,000 meters. He is 41 years young. He qualified for his fifth Olympics, which means some of the guys he beat were mere grade-schoolers when he ran in his first

Olympics.

Afterwards, in the media tent, he said, “If you think of yourself as an old man, you will run like an old man.”

Perhaps it’s time to change my way of thinking...

Lagat’s joy in winning may have been the most demonstrative of any of the event champions. He appeared at first to be about to cry, and then his face absolutely beamed as he celebrated with the other qualifiers.

On the other end of the spectrum, 16-year-old Sydney McLaughlin of Scotch Plains, New Jersey shattered the world junior record in the 400 hurdles on her way to placing third and qualifying for the Olympics. Her time of 54.15 is the sixth best time in the world this year.

For perspective, the fastest high school girl in Oregon ran 55.66 for 400 meters without having to deal with 10 sets of hurdles in the way.

In interviews after the race, she appeared to be in a dream, barely able to comprehend that she was indeed an Olympian. She said, “I can’t believe this is happening right now. Just hearing the word ‘Olympics’ was a dream in the back of my mind. I was like, ‘Oh yeah I’m going to the trials,’ but it’s not going to happen (make it to Rio).”

A slew of Oregon-linked athletes qualified for the Olympics as well, including current and former Ducks Devon Allen (110 hurdles); Galen Rupp (marathon and 10,000); Deajah Stevens and Jenna Prandini (200 meters); English Gardner (100 meters); Cyrus Hostetler (javelin); Matt Centrowitz (1,500 meters); and of course, Ashton Eaton (decathlon), among others. A number of other qualifiers are based in Oregon through the Oregon Track Club, the Bowerman Track Club, and the Nike Oregon Project.

Not every athlete with

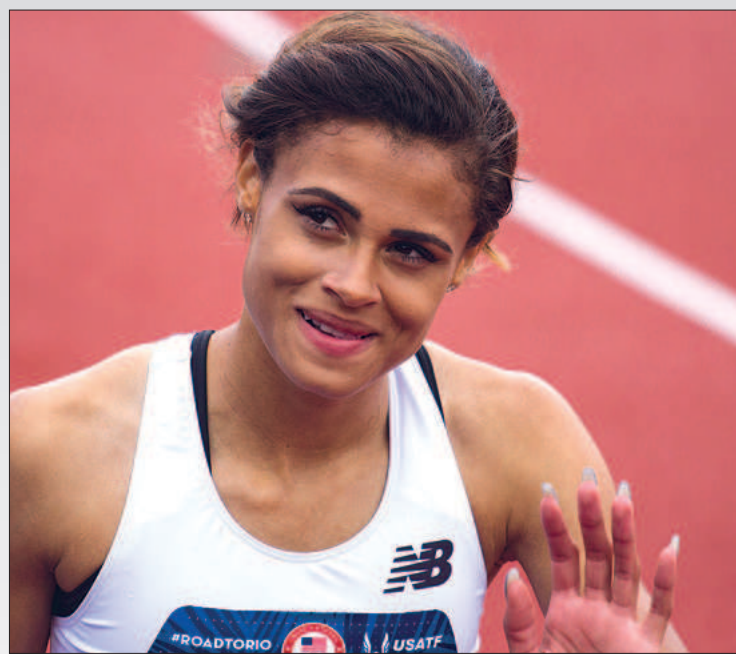


PHOTO BY CHARLIE KANZIG

16-year-old Sydney McLaughlin shyly acknowledged the Hayward Field crowd after qualifying for the Olympics in the 400-meter hurdles.

Oregon ties made it to the Olympics, but the partisan crowd certainly contributed mightily to supporting them and, for some, the electricity carried them well past the finish line. When Devon Allen won the 110 hurdles he kept on running, jumped the fence and embraced members of his family. Track officials finally coaxed him back onto the track where

he belonged, but it was a poignant, joyful moment for sure.

I think all of the record-breaking crowds who attended would agree that Eugene, “Track Town, USA” once again, hosted a world-class event.

The Olympic track and field events begin in Rio on Friday, August 12 and run through August 21.

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