

Ryun's comeback road reaches fork to Munich

Jim Ryun is back for one more try at the Olympics.

The world record-holder at 880 yard, one mile and 1,500 meters will begin his Olympic try today in the first race of the Trials—the first heat of the 800 meter run.

Ryun's comeback road after running second to Kip Keino in the 1968 Olympics has been long and problematic.

A year ago he came to Eugene to stage his comeback, but became the victim of hay fever aggravated by the high pollen in the valley during the early summer month. His training was moved to Southern California, but eventually again moved back to Kansas for training under his former collegiate coach, Bob Timmons.

Ryun's comeback was up and down and hit a peak in the Vons Classic, winning the mile in 3:57.1—the second fastest mile in the nation this year (Steve Prefontaine's 3:56.7 is the fastest). Now Ryun will double in the Trials in Eugene with hopes of doubling in the Olympics in Munich.

"I'm serious about both events," he said Wednesday when asked if he is running both for insurance to qualify. Ryun left no doubt that he plans to compete in both events in Germany should he qualify for both here.

Naturally a big thought on everyone's mind, including his own, is the hay fever. "I've been here since Tuesday and it hasn't bothered me at all. I've felt no effects from it."

As of Wednesday.

The 800 meters last through Saturday. The 1,500 doesn't begin until July 6.

Ryun is taking no chances, though, as his allergy

doctor is "vacationing" in Eugene to see the Trials—and to offer assistance to Ryun if needed. Also an air purifier has been installed in his hotel room. Both should help.

Barring pollen attacks from the local grain fields, Ryun will still have his hands full with mortals like Dave Wottle, Bowling Green's 1,500 NCAA titlist, and Tom Von Ruden both doubling along with Ryun in the two races.

And Ryun still has to face the regular 800 meter cast that includes Juris Luzins (1:46.9); Mark Winzenreid (1:47.1), and Ken Swensen (1:47.4).

Ryun may have easier going in the 1500 meters where he owns the second fastest time in the field with his 3:57.1 Vons mile. Only marine Howell Michael (3:38.3 for 1500 meters) has a faster time.

The last time Ryun ran in Eugene he ran 10th in the Twilight meet in a field of 11. But he hopes his precautions have killed any chance of repeating the crippling allergy attack that stopped him a year ago. And Ryun likes the fast Stevenson track.

Getting him to pinpoint a time he's shooting for is all but impossible. "I really can't say. Sometimes everyone will lag and sprint at the end and other times they'll keep a good pace all the way."

But with the competition he is facing in the 800 meters, fast times may be guaranteed.

And with many people trying to blame Ryun's ups and downs along the comeback trail on his mental attitude, that fast time at the beginning of the ten-day long Trials may be just what he needs. A respectable showing in the 800 meters should put his mental attitude—and Olympic hopes—in great shape for the 1500 meters.

But Stevenson is quite alive

Hayward Field is getting tired

"Hayward Field is tired . . . but you'd be tired too if you had been holding up thousands of stomping, screaming fans for over 50 years. Enough, however, is enough! The grandstands are tired . . ."

That plaintive cry comes from a circular making the round in Eugene—an appeal to local fans to help finance a new seating structure for Hayward Field—the staid old barn that's site of this year's U.S. Olympic Trials.

But although the ancient wooden seats might be on their last legs (and those foot-long slivers might be inching up your leg), the University of Oregon's track and field facility is first class. Especially the track.

The urethane surface that rings Stevenson track (and makes up the long jump and javelin runway) is the fastest surface in the world. Ask John Smith or Rod Milburn how they like Hayward's urethane.

"I love it here," Smith has said. And he's got good reason—he set a world record of 44.5 (440) in the AAU championships last year

and this year blazed to an identical time in the 400 meters to win the NCAA title.

As for Milburn—nobody knew his name until he got his spikes planted on Oregon's lightning surface. He clicked off a world-record 13.0 in the high hurdles and has been crushing everybody else in the event since.

On the first day of this year's NCAA Championships, everything came to a standstill after the second heat in the 100 meters.

Don Quarrie of USC and Ivory Crockett of Southern Illinois flashed across the finish line in a near dead-heat—and the data timer on the field showed 9.6!

The fastest 100 meters run on earth? Not quite. Urethane isn't that fast—the guy who starts the data timer had his vision obstructed just at the start of the race and the time was "adjusted" to 9.9. Still good enough to equal the world record.

Stevenson track has been the home roost for America's finest distance runner—Oregon's Steve Prefontaine.

He set the American 5,000 meter mark here (13:29.6).

It's the place where the American record in the steeplechase was set—8:26.4 by Sid Sink. In fact, four out of the top five U.S. clockings in the steeplechase were set at Hayward Field.

So bear with the rickety old grandstands—the big wooden beam that's smack dab in your line of vision.

But don't make any sudden moves (if everybody stood up too quickly to applaud it could be trouble—those boards are old); just remember—tracks don't come any faster than Stevenson's urethane.

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