

Mann a question mark, but still hurdle favorite

One of the biggest question marks in the Olympic Trials is 400-meter hurdler Ralph Mann. Is he all the way back from an April foot injury which forced a three-week layoff and put a shroud on his plans for making the Olympic team?

The former BYU star, NCAA

Bob Cassleman of Michigan State. The Penn youngster is a big choice to get to the finals, but pre-meet predictions in some areas have doomed him to fourth, even fifth, behind the more seasoned entrants.

"It's funny," sighed Collins on

nevertheless holders of excellent times—should make the cut-off, too. And they could spring some surprises.

Men like Bob Bruggeman, who won the AAU title in 50 flat, and Williams, who owns a season best of 49.7. Those two are in the third heat.

Bolding is still smarting from the lesson administered by Collins in the NCAA (he was later disqualified from that race for running out of his lane).

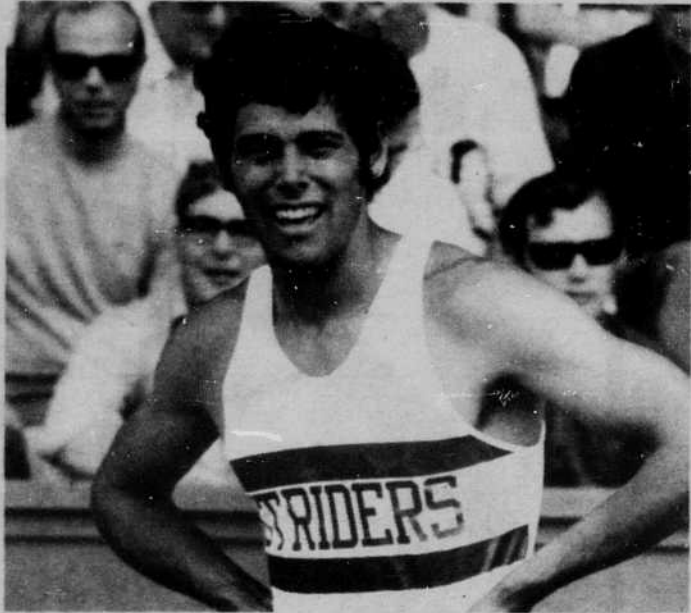
He's running the fourth heat along with Efren Gibson of Lamar University, holder of a fast 49.6, Carl Wood (50.3) of Richmond, and Ron Rondeau of UTEP (50.3).

With the individual duels expected to overshadow a dominant sweep by one man, records are unlikely in this one.

"The low 49's will make the team," says Mann. "But I can't say that will win. It could take less than 49 seconds to win it."

It's a few steps away from Dave Emery's world 400 meter record of 48.1, but that is the least concern of men like Ralph Mann and Bruce Collins.

With a field like this, the main objective is survival.



Mann

champ, and world record holder (48.8 in the 440 hurdles) will have to be.

As the event begins today at 12:15, there are no less than six men who could make things sticky for the favorite regardless of his condition.

Foremost among these is a 21-year-old out of Penn named Bruce Collins. Collins shares the world's fastest time this year (49.1) with Mann.

And Collins is healthy. His last big race came in the NCAA Championships here, where he cruised past Oklahoma State's Jim Bolding (49.5) to win the title.

Bolding is another man considered a prime contender for one of the Olympic berths, along with veterans Mel Bassett of North Carolina Central, Boyd Gittins of the Cougar Track Club, Ron Whitney of the SC Striders, and Wes Williams of the San Diego Track Club.

It appears that Mann, if in top shape, and Whitney, the cagey old pro, are the most likely to succeed in this one.

Today's first heat matches Collins against Bassett, Mike Cronholm of Rice, Gittins, and

the eve of his first heat. "I was reading an article the other day, and they went over almost all the hurdlers. They didn't say anything about me."

"I kind of enjoyed that. I like being called the underdog in this race."

For Mann, the guy with the movie-star looks and Burt Reynolds mystique, the problem is anything but anonymity.

But he's always been confident. "The only person that can beat me is myself," he's said. "If I don't run a smart race..."

The pause means if he doesn't run a good race somebody like Collins, Whitney, or Bolding will flash by and that will be it. End of dream.

He gets his licks in right after Collins in the second heat, running against Whitney (49.9), David Adkins of the Florida Track Club (50.6), Chris Adsit of Colorado State (50.4) and Terry Lee Musika (50.2) of Pacific Coast Club.

Four men in each heat qualify for the semi-finals which begin at 4:15 on Saturday. Mann, Collins, and Whitney—barring apoplexy—will make it there.

Some unsung men—

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