



No surprises yet favorites survive

Rod Milburn (above) and Jim Ryun

and Reginald McAfee were among

those coasting into semifinals Thursday

Sitting through Thursday's session of the Olympic Trials was kind of like watching a Communist election—you always knew who was going to win.

While not exactly ho-hum, the day proved to be almost entirely predictable.

In sharp contrast to the previous week's first day of competition, all the favorites survived; the dark horses didn't come through and the times weren't outstanding overall.

The athletes ran "strategy" races in first competition of the 110 meter high hurdles, the 400, 1500 and 5000 meter runs. They used "tactics" instead of all-out efforts. To put it bluntly, they coasted.

But the end result was a proper weeding-out process, leaving only the best to compete against each other throughout the remainder of competition—to compete for the three Olympic berths in their chosen event.

And what competition that should be.

In the 1500, there's still the possible rematch of Dave Wottle and Jim Ryun. Last time they met, Wottle out-kicked the veteran Ryun en route to tying the world record in the 800 meters and qualifying for the Olympic team. (See story page 12.)

But the 1500 won't be the only battle of super heavyweights.

In the 110 hurdles, favorite Rod Milburn—who says he's going to run a world record here before the week's out—was joined by veteran Willie Davenport, NCAA champ and Hayward Field record holder Thomas Hill, USC's Jerry Wilson, Tommy Lee White and Charles Rich.

That dream field probably won't be altered much before Sunday night's final. (See story page 10.)

If the promises of races to come in those two events weren't enough, there are still two other events with dream fields after Thursday's eliminations.

Among those still alive in the 400 meters are world record holder Lee Evans, Vince Mathews, Curtis Mills, Fred Newhouse, Wayne Collett, Tommie Turner, John Smith and Maurice Peoples. (See stories pages 8 and 9.)

And to top it all off is the promise of a real nail-biter in the last event of the meet—the finals of the 5000 meter run.

In any event many conceded to Steve Prefontaine long ago, a new excitement was promised by the results of Thursday's semifinals.

Suddenly the race no longer belongs to one man—it has become the refuge for many of those fate frowned upon in other events last week. And they're hanging on for their lives—and any chance they might have for a trip to Munich.

There's Gerry Lindgren, American record holder at three miles, third all-time U.S. 5000 meter runner and winner of six NCAA titles hanging on in this event after failing in an attempt at the 10,000. Also here from the 10,000 is Greg Fredericks—recent American record holder in that event.

And from the steeplechase are American record-holder Sid Sink; fifth place finisher in last week's steeplechase final, Cliff Clark; and Washington's Jim Johnson.

If that weren't enough, from out of nowhere have emerged a couple of veterans ready—and willing—to attempt a coup in the 5000 meters. Men like George Young and Tracy Smith always give a race their all. You can rest assured they will be going all out to show Pre a thing or two. (See story page 11.)

With races like those in the offing, it's worth sitting through one day of no surprises. Because when the favorites meet, you can rest assured there will be plenty of surprises—and lots of excitement.

