

Pre, Geis run fastest 2-mile (in the world)

By ART BUSHNELL
Of the Emerald

The two Oregon distance men, one wearing the Duck uniform, the other competing for the Oregon Track Club, had just run the two fastest two mile races in the world this year.

But, in the darkness of Hayward Field after Tuesday night's second Oregon Twilight Meet of the year, the moods of Steve Prefontaine and Paul Geis were totally different.

Geis was elated. His second place 8:24.8 was the second best time in the world this year, eleventh fastest ever run anywhere.

More importantly to the sophomore transfer student from Rice, his time was a world age group record.

His time shattered Prefontaine's outdoor world record for 20-year-olds of 8:33.2 (run when Pre was a sophomore). And it bettered by almost seven seconds the 20-year-old best of 8:31.6 run indoors and held by both Pre and Gerry Lindgren.

"It's a world record," he shouted to his roommate Steve Bence as he ran into the Duck dressing room, picked up his bag and sprinted out the door.

The former holder of the world record for 20-year-olds remained on the track. And Pre was mad.

His winning 8:24.6. showed ample recovery from his injury and broke his tack record 8:31.8.

But now he was fuming.

"The plan was for Mark Feig to take us through the first two laps in 2:05. (Feig ran the first 880 in just over 2:06.) Paul and I were to alternate the lead each lap after that. Paul took the lead for one lap, then he just lagged behind. That wasn't the game plan.

"If he says something he'd better do it. Next time I'll take him through the first mile in 4:05 (This time he'd crossed the half-way point in 4:14) and see how he likes that. I'm a little disappointed. A guy says he's going to help you with the race and then he doesn't. That makes the whole race disappointing.

"Paul's a very fine runner. He'll do a lot of good things for the University. But he's got to learn to grow up a bit."

Pre's criticism dampened Geis' spirits a bit, but he was still quite pleased with his time.

"I didn't think I could do that. I don't blame Pre for being upset.

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I'd be pissed, too, if somebody sat on me and got that good a time.

"But I'd said I would help him set the pace until I couldn't help any more and then hang on until I died. I just couldn't have helped him after leading the third lap. I was having enough trouble keeping up, I couldn't have kept up the pace on my own."

Geis said the Oregon track fans had a great deal to do with his finishing time.

"I really got into the crowd. I really got turned on to it. That's never happened to me before, now I know what Pre means when he talks about the fans here."

The new record-holder said he'd "had it in the back of my mind to break that record all year" but was "very surprised" to have done so.

"I pretty much have those records memorized. I was really happy when it looked like I would make it. It took a little of the fun out of it having everybody so pissed off at me.

"I'm sure Pre and I will come to some kind of agreement about this in the future. Meaning next time I'll take the lead a little more and he'll forget about this time.

"But that's the best race of my life, it was my most competitive race."

For the ineligible transfer, the race marked the completion of a four-race ordeal in less than two weeks. He's now run a three-mile, two two-miles and a 7.8-mile run in that time.

Now he'll look ahead to the AAU championships, where he'll run the three-mile and try to gain a spot on the team that will compete in the University Games in Moscow.

Two other Oregon runners were left looking forward to future competition after the twilight meet.

One was Geis' roommate, Bence.

The half-miler had just qualified for the NCAA meet with a life-time best 1:48.2. He held off a charging Hailu Ebba through the last curve and then thanked the Oregon State runner for helping him qualify for the nationals.

"I was slowing down, then he came up alongside me and I started running. Hailu had said he was only going to run a 660, but he said he wanted to help me out so he kept on going.

"After this I think I can place in the NCAA. It's been a long season, but maybe it's just starting. I was waiting for the Pac-8 and the NCAA and then I got hurt for the conference meet.

"I'd been pointing for that all season and then I was injured. I just hadn't taken those other races seriously. Maybe I'd been training too hard and the injury gave me the little bit of rest I needed."

Prefontaine, too, was looking to post-season competition.

But he was mad about that, also.

He was highly critical of the AAU officials who are "treating me like a 12-year old" and said if the organization didn't give him a travel permit, he would compete on his own.

"I'm an American citizen. What right do they have to keep me from doing anything. If I lose my amateur status, that just means I won't be able to compete in any more Olympics."

Two other Oregon runners were left without a berth in the NCAAAs after the twilight qualifier. Neither Gary Barger in the mile or John Mays in the 100 were able to meet the standards for the collegiate championships.

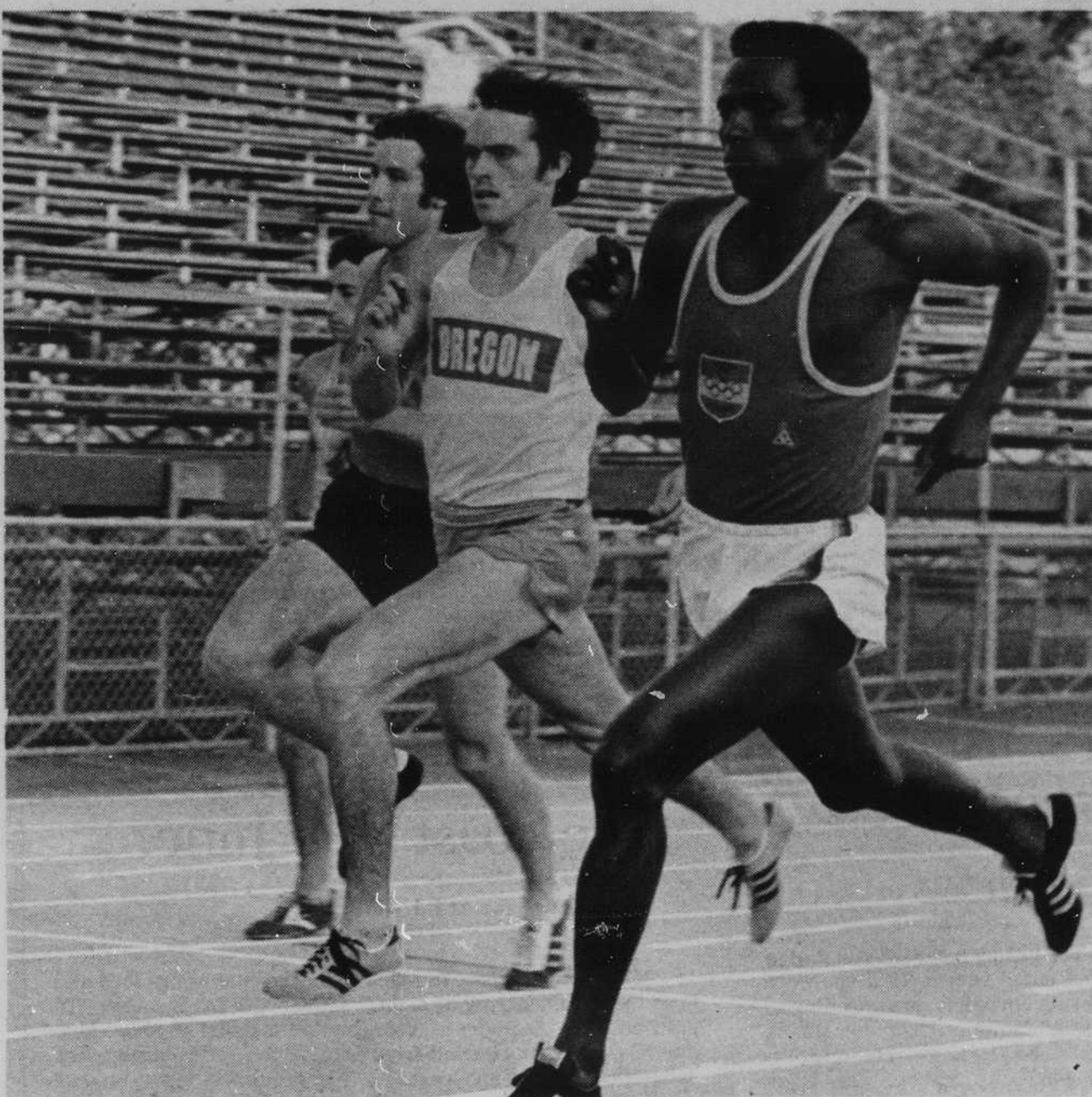
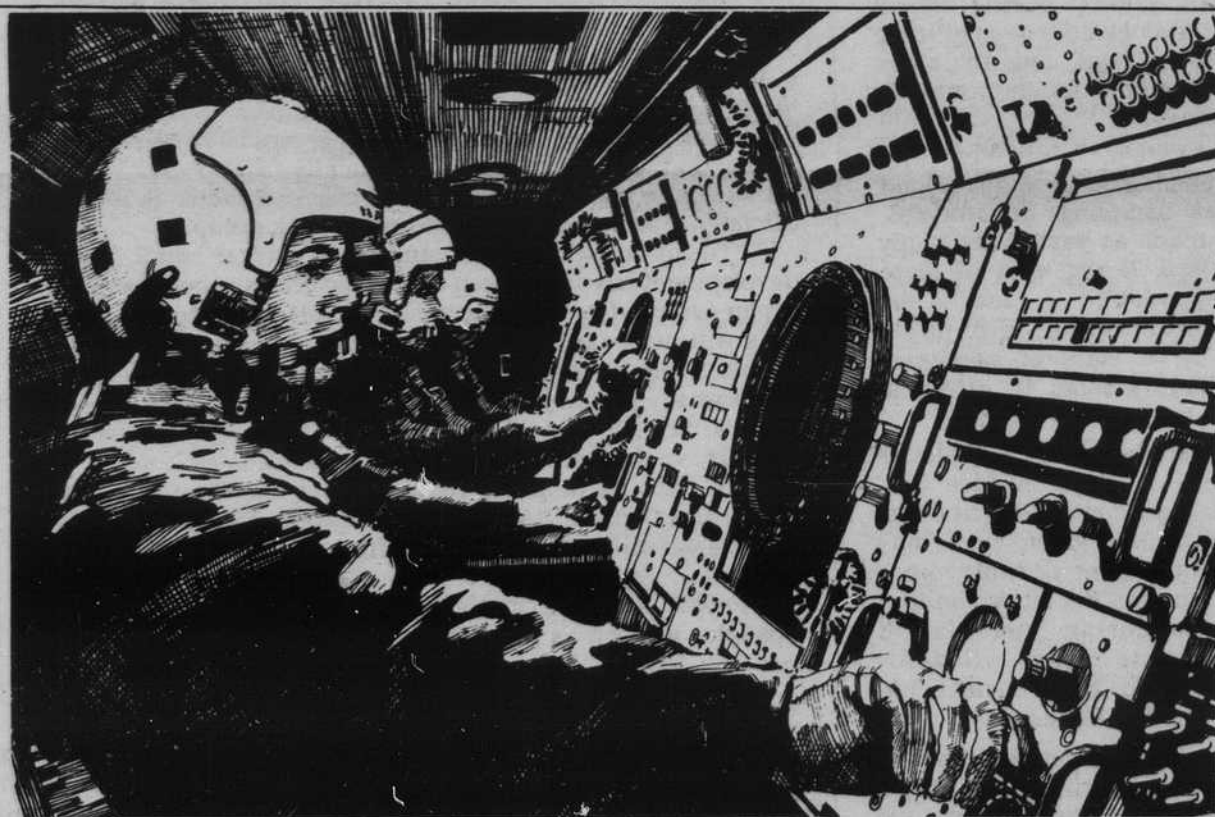


Photo by James Link

Steve Bence (center) streaked by Oregon State Beavers Hailu Ebba and Clay Lowrey to win the Twilight 880 run last night at Hayward Field. Bence, running a lifetime best 1:48.2, easily

bettered the NCAA qualifying standard on 1:49.5. Lowrey also ran a lifetime best of 1:48.7 finishing second. Ebba, two-time Pacific-8 mile champ, trailed in third, 1:50.4.



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