



'A death that shocked everyone'

Photo by Warren Morgan

STEVE ROLAND PREFONTAINE

Perhaps the greatest athlete ever to come out of the University of Oregon — Steve Prefontaine — died Friday morning in a one-car accident just a few blocks from the arena where he ran as America's foremost distance runner.

It was a death that shocked everyone. At the age of 24, Pre's career was snuffed before what many, including Pre, thought would be his best years.

The vitality, the competitiveness, the excitement he stirred, but most of all his charismatic no-

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University to get more money, not less

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Editor's Note: Mike Dolan is one of two students who cover the state Legislature for the Emerald on a full-time basis.

SALEM — Now that state employe pay package has passed the Legislature, what does it mean for the state — and for higher education?

HB-5063, which appropriates \$91 million in raises over the next two years, has been surrounded by controversy since it was first introduced.

Its first opponents claimed that the bill had no place in a collective bargaining process in which employes and employer are supposed to work out their differences without interference from the Legislature.

And when the Joint Ways and Means Committee sliced \$10 million

from the governor's original request of \$101 million, critics immediately predicted a "cut back" in state services.

University President Robert Clark — in one of his final legislative battles before retiring this month — said HB-5063 means the loss of 45 faculty positions at this University alone.

His statement is just part of a numbers war that has ensued over since legislative leaders invented the idea of "underfunding."

The Clark figure of 45 is based on the idea that HB-5063 calls for a two per cent cut back of state employes. Clark slapped the two per cent on the University and came out with 45 positions.

But the two per cent idea is not a very sound one. It originated with Gov. Bob Straub who said HB-5063 — since it is \$10 million less than his latest offer to the Oregon State Employees Association (OSEA) — means the equivalent of the loss of 1,000 state

jobs at the \$10,000 annual salary level.

It is the roughest of estimates based on the unproven assumption that the average state salary is \$10,000 a year. The number also includes jobs already vacant.

The difference between Straub's offer and HB-5063 does not necessarily mean job cut-backs. The idea behind the bill is to appropriate no pay increases for jobs that will probably be vacant for a little while because of normal job turnover.

analysis

That is what legislative leaders call "underfunding." Both Straub and the Legislature agree that at least five per cent of the public employe force is always vacant.

The pay agreement alone will probably not cause higher education to cut back any employes. Sen Jack Ripper, co-chairer of the Ways and Means Committee and one of the inventors of "underfunding," says members of the higher education department are using HB-5063 as an excuse, if they say it will cause job cut-backs.

Higher education will get the same money for salaries as in the previous budget plus some more for pay raises. HB-5063 contains about \$26 million for higher education — it will be paid to the employes after the governor and the OSEA reach a pay agreement.

On top of that, the state's budget calls for another \$12 million in pay raises to be financed by increased tuition.

No matter what happens, the University will be getting more money not less.

Some people have wondered if

this means a slow down in the University's young affirmative action program.

It may. The true intent of Ripper and other members of the Ways and Means Committee is not clear. They may be using the idea of underfunding to reduce the number of employes in large state agencies, something it cannot do outright because of the strong (but untested) employes' association.

But underfunding will probably strike large social services agencies the most. The Children's Services Division has an annual turnover of nearly 40 per cent.

So what does all this mean for percentage pay increase for higher education employes? Nobody can tell for sure how the money will translate into salary increases for individuals. Only an expert budget analyst can tell for sure, and the various parties are quoting their own experts who reach conflicting conclusions.

One thing seems certain: HB-5063 means at least a 10 per cent pay increase for this year and next. Ripper says the bill provides a two-year pay raise of 26 per cent if you count fringe benefits.

Straub offered the employes an identical \$91 million raise as his first bargaining offer back in January — and he called it a 21 per cent raise.

The final total will have to be worked out in each department of state government.

When the governor's pay negotiators and the OSEA finally come to a pay agreement, the State Board of Higher Education, like other state governing bodies, will be able to parcel out the raises as it sees fit.

The board can determine the exact amount of raises. And, more importantly, it can allot the money in such a way, that neither faculty nor staff have to be laid off.

bility, is gone forever. Only the legacy of previous accomplishments stand as a guide to Pre's unique talents. And they are many.

His body was found pinned beneath his small sports car at 12:40 a.m. Friday, about five hours after he had run the second fastest 5,000-meter race in American history. He also ran the first.

The sad details of Pre's death are simple. Returning home from a party, Pre crossed over the center-line of Skyline Blvd and hit a rock embankment. The car flipped over, pinning him helplessly. After investigation of the crash, it was discovered that if Pre had been wearing his seat belt, he probably would have lived.

Furthermore, Pre had been drinking. A sample of his blood showed an alcohol content of sixteen-hundredths of one per cent. Under Oregon law, a level of ten-hundredths of one per cent is considered unsafe for driving. Whether his drinking caused the accident probably will never be known.

Funeral services will be held at 3 p.m. today in the stadium at Marshfield High School in Coos Bay, the place where Pre's legendary career began. Two of Pre's former coaches, Walt McClure of Marshfield High and Bill Bowerman of Oregon, will deliver eulogies. A private burial will follow at Sunset Memorial Park in Coos Bay.

Many of those who were close to Pre typified the kind of performer and person he was. They also expressed grief.

"I'm so struck," said Kenny Moore, a good friend of Pre's for many years, who was preparing a profile recently on Prefontaine for *Sports Illustrated*. "It's really incredible. My emotional reaction is so much stronger because I know that he'd be so impatient of our inability to handle this situation."

"He was the greatest competitor I've ever encountered," said Paul Geis, a distance runner currently on the Oregon track team.

Norv Ritchey, UO athletic director, summed it up: "The impact is unbelievable. The shroud is over the whole nation, not just Eugene or Coos Bay."

More on Pre's career on pages 4 and 5.

Senate kills drink bill

SALEM — The 19-year-old drinking bill was tagged sliding into home Saturday when the Senate defeated the measure after it had already passed the House and the Senate Judiciary Committee.

HB-2397 would have lowered the legal drinking age in Oregon from 21 to 19. It was rejected by a vote of 19-9.

The bill had the support of the Associated Oregon Student Lobby (AOSL).

Much of the debate according to the *Eugene Register-Guard*, centered on the automobile accident late Thursday night that killed 24-year-old Steve Prefontaine.

Some of the senators, especially Victor Atiyeh, R-Beaverton, pointed to the death as an example of what will happen to young people who drink legally and drive.

The alcohol level in Prefontaine's blood exceeded the amount needed to qualify as legally drunk.

However, Sen. Betty Roberts, D-Portland, said the athlete's death had nothing to do with drinking by 19- and 20-year-olds.

Sen. Frank Roberts, D-Portland, in defending HB-2397, said the bill would have made the drinking limit consistent with other legal definitions of the age of majority.