

Salazar just beginning TAC battle

Former Oregon runner challenges governing body

By STEVE SPATZ
Of the Emerald

Alberto Salazar says he's only just begun his fight against the governing body of amateur athletics.

Just days removed from his record-breaking run in the New York Marathon Oct. 25, Salazar lashed out once more at The Athletics Congress (TAC) at a Thursday news conference in McArthur Court's Lettermen's Lounge.

The former University running star's criticisms of the TAC were widely quoted following his second straight win on the grueling New York course. Newspapers around the nation carried Salazar's comments

that TAC officials are "thieves and hypocrites."

"I don't have too much respect for the TAC," Salazar was quoted as saying in New York Monday. "I don't care what they think."

TAC is the governing body for most amateur athletics in the United States.

Before members of the local media, Salazar restated some of his gripes against the TAC, and said he plans to use his newfound fame as a platform for his crusade.

"I wouldn't feel right just sitting back, now that I've made it," said Salazar, who is working for Nike, Inc. in the international marketing division. "A lot of

athletes have been a little more vocal on their way up. But once they're on top, and they're comfortable, they're very quiet.

"Steve Prefontaine, before he died, was planning to take on the TAC in court. He was really the only other athlete who struck out against the TAC. I really admired him for that, and I feel the same way about it."

"I feel that I'm in a position now that I can do a lot more than all the other athletes can. I was told by some people at Nike that my statements against the TAC as they were taken right after the New York race carried more weight than all the other statements made by all the other athletes put together."

But Salazar is also wary of the consequences a battle with the TAC may mean for him. Salazar requested that no specific questions be asked about under-the-table payments he may have received in races in case TAC ever wanted to get even.

"I can't answer any direct questions about any particular race because in doing so I would just endanger my eligibility with TAC," he said.

"I feel that at this point that they may be looking at me, wanting to strike back at me. So I'm not going to set myself up by making any direct statements."

Salazar, who is said to have received nearly \$14,000 for his win in New York, admitted that he makes his living by running — either legally or illegally under TAC regulations.

"I've made a lot of statements where everybody can get the idea that there are under-the-table payments in almost all major races in the United States.

"I'm not scared to admit that I am making my living off running. I do this through Nike, who I am an employee for, and in races where there are ways where I can give a clinic and be subsidized for giving a clinic. It's completely legitimate because I am providing a service.

"Of course the fact that I'm running in a race held in conjunction with that clinic is just a coincidence."

Salazar doesn't believe that the TAC would or could try to question his eligibility for ama-



Photo by Bob Baker

Alberto Salazar is challenging The Athletic Congress' rules governing earnings of amateur athletes.

tuer races. Nevertheless he's not taking any chances.

"I just think it's a situation where I have to be careful. They may decide that they're going to go after somebody and get a scapegoat, and they're going to show an example to the other athletes.

"I don't think they'd be able to pull it off, but I'm not going to give them any more of an advantage than they'll be able to get on their own."

Salazar's complaints about the TAC stem mostly from its policy towards money earned by athletes, and whether or not an athlete is truly an "amateur" or a "pro."

"It's a game that they're playing — are you an amateur or are you a professional? It's a very hypocritical situation with the TAC just playing on words and trying to deceive the public by trying to uphold the image of the amateur athlete, which isn't there anymore, and shouldn't be."

Salazar recounted the story how Allison Roe, winner of the women's division of the New York event, was nearly barred

from competing after accepting \$4,000 in prize money from the Cascade Run-Off in Portland, June 28.

But as soon as she agreed to deposit her winnings in a trust fund supervised by the New Zealand Federation — her country's version of TAC — Roe was once again declared an amateur by TAC.

"It's a situation where the TAC wants to keep financial control of the athletes," said Salazar. "Anytime you have the situation where an athlete was making an endorsement, as they were in the past, would only get \$5,000 of the \$30,000 paid by the company. The TAC gets the other \$25,000, and that's just complete injustice as far as I can see that they're only getting 10 percent of the money that they're working for."

Salazar's concerns for the moment include his marriage to Molly Morton on Dec. 21, working for Nike and getting back into training. "I'm feeling a lot better this year after the marathon," he said. "I'm a lot less sore. By next week I can resume a training schedule of 80 or 90% of what I do."

The National Cross Country Championships in late November could be Salazar's next targets, as well as some indoor meets starting in January. Next spring he'll work for improvement in the 5,000 and 10,000 meter races.

"Last year, I set a P.R. (personal record) in the 10,000, (27:48.69) only 18 seconds off the world's record. I feel with the right training I can get down close to that.

And looming in the distant horizon is the 1984 Olympics. "If I improve by 1984 and I'm a favorite in the 10,000, then I'll probably run in that, and then come back in the marathon. That way I would have a chance at a gold plus a bronze to a gold in the marathon.

"But you never know what's going to happen."

Friday, October 30, 1981

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