

A race to be remembered



It was all there if you were a diehard Oregon track fan — the rain, the cold, a dual meet and Alberto Salazar in the thick of a hotly contested 10,000-meter race.

And as befits the world-record holder in the marathon, Salazar jumped to center stage Saturday at Hayward Field, challenging a world-class field to stay with him as he reeled off lap after lap on a record pace.

In the end, it was another record-holder by the name of Henry Rono who surged past Salazar to win in history's fourth-fastest 10,000-meter time — 27:29.90 — with Salazar finishing in 27:30.0, just short of Craig Virgin's American record of 27:29.16.

Before Salazar and Rono faced one another in the 10,000, the Oregon men's team easily defeated a thin Louisiana State dual squad, 93-60. The Ducks won 10 events, including an NCAA-qualifying time of 13:30.52 by Jim Hill in the 5,000 meters.

The special 10,000-meter race was Salazar's idea, an outgrowth of his desire to return to Oregon track some of the support he received while running for the Ducks.

He assembled one of the most impressive 10,000-meter fields ever seen on United States soil and announced that he would run as hard as he could, daring the rest of the field to stay with him.

Most of the field did, at least for a few laps. Then they began dropping off, until only three-time NCAA champion Michael Musyoki, 12-time NCAA champion Suleiman Nyambui and outstanding Englishman Adrian Royle remained with Rono and Salazar.

"People in Eugene have never seen a field like this before," Oregon coach Bill Dellinger said, watching as Musyoki, Nyambui and Royle all finally dropped off the pace, leaving Rono and Salazar to battle themselves and one another.

*Story by
John Healy
Photos by
Bob Baker
and
Mark Pynes*

Rono finally took the lead with 600 meters remaining, and it appeared that the hex he seems to hold over Salazar would once again work.

Salazar didn't fold, though, instead trying three times to push past the Kenyan, who holds world records in the steeplechase, 3,000-, 5,000-, and 10,000-meters.

"I didn't think anyone was confident enough to run that hard the whole way," said Salazar in reference to Rono.

Salazar's final attempt to pass

Rono came over the final 100 meters. He pulled alongside Salazar, got a step ahead, then fell even with the eventual winner before Rono was able to pull ahead.

"I respect him greatly as a runner but the win was so close," said Salazar, pulling on his sweats while sitting in the equipment shack at the south end of Hayward Field.

"It's only a matter of time and it (Salazar's 10,000 time) will be faster. I still have a lot of years ahead of me," he said. "But today, I ran as fast as I could."

Royle finished third in 27:47.16; Dan Dillon fourth in 28:05.75; Nyambui fifth in 28:07.09; Musyoki sixth in 28:13.86.

In the Oregon-LSU dual, the Ducks outscored their opponents 23-4 in the weight events and 26-10 in the middle and long distances, plus winning both relays, to notch their first home dual meet victory this spring.

The brothers Crouser swept the weights, with freshman Brian winning the javelin with a throw of 230-10 and Dean taking first in the shot put (63-0½) and discus (197-3); John Brauer won the steeplechase in 9:13.40; David Mack moved up to the 1,500 and won in 3:45.11; Don Wright cruised to a 14.21 win in the high hurdles; Brett Tate leaped 46-10¼ to win the triple jump; and Hill won the 5,000.



Henry Rono and Alberto Salazar challenged each other and the record book Saturday at Hayward Field. The duo clocked the fourth and fifth fastest 10,000 meter times in history, with Rono winning, 27:29.90 to 27:30.0. Rono shadowed Salazar for all but the last 600 meters, when he moved around the former Oregon star and into the lead (top). The pair were never more than a step apart in the final 100 meters. Rono barely outleaned Salazar at the tape (middle left) and then congratulated him after the race (bottom left). In the Oregon-Louisiana State dual meet preceding the 10,000, Oregon's Jim Hill ran an NCAA-qualifying 13:30.52 in the 5,000 (bottom right).

