

Falcon, Blanchette top field at Pre Classic

Smith, Deal also thrill

By Ashley Conklin
Emerald Sports Reporter

Joe Falcon might not consider himself a 5,000-meter runner, but at Friday's Prefontaine Classic at Hayward Field, Falcon looked like he was made for the race.

Falcon was part of a star-studded field that included Doug Padilla and Steve Plasencia. They were all seeking to go under the top time in the world this season — 13:24.86 by Australia's Andrew Lloyd — and earn a \$5,000 bonus for doing so.

The field separated early on, and the race was between Plasencia and Falcon. But after sticking with Plasencia for the first 11½ laps, Falcon put on the afterburners over the last 400 meters and pulled away from Plasencia.

Falcon was timed in 55.0 for the last lap and broke the tape in 13:20.49 to earn the \$5,000 bonus with the fastest time in the world this season.



Photo by Steve Card

After four years of struggling with knee injuries, javelin thrower Karin Smith made an impressive comeback at Friday's Prefontaine Classic. Smith's throw of 211-6 was the best by an American this season.

For Falcon, the former Arkansas star, it was the first 5,000 he had run since college. Afterward, he said he still considers himself a miler.

"I still think I'm a better miler than a 5,000 runner," Falcon said. "To be honest the pace was too slow, too choppy for

me and I didn't feel good. I think that means I can run much faster."

Despite the time, Falcon said he won't run more than maybe "one 5,000 a year," for the next three years.

"I honestly believe I can run 3:48 for the mile," he said. "I

might move up to the 5,000 after the 1992 Olympic Games but my coach and I believe I should exhaust my potential at the lower distances before moving up."

Falcon said that being primarily a miler helped him in this race.

"I wanted to start going faster and make the cadence more like a mile where I feel more comfortable," he said. "I wanted to press it at the last mile because I knew I was the best miler in the field and I didn't see anyone who could go with me."

While the Springfield, Mo., native had the performance of the meet, three local athletes had outstanding marks as well.

Craig Blanchette, who set the world record in the wheelchair mile at last year's Prefontaine Classic, set another this year with a time of 3:50.00 to break last year's mark of 3:51.00.

Blanchette was hoping for a time around 3:40, but that went out the window because of the slow pace. The record was there, however, when second-place finisher Tony Nogueiro paced Blanchette through the last 300 meters.

"I was planning on 55-57 second laps, but the pace was so slow that I'm not even out of breath," Blanchette said. "Tony Nogueiro from Georgia had a 3:37 in a time trial last week, but he's not experienced in racing."

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