

Mile, two-mile races highlight Pre Classic

By Ashley Conklin
Emerald Sports Editor

When track meet promoters receive any news the week of a meet, it's usually bad news.

But Prefontaine Classic meet director Tom Jordan has received nothing but good news this week with the addition of two top American middle-distance runners for Friday's meet at Hayward Field.

On Monday, Suzy Hamilton, formerly Suzy Favor, announced she would run the mile at the Prefontaine Classic. Then on Tuesday, PattiSue Plumer said she would join the mile field as well.

Friday night's race sets up a rematch of last weekend's The Athletic Congress national championship 1,500-meter run, where Hamilton and Plumer exchanged elbows in the home stretch before Hamilton won the race by a stride over Plumer.

"The women's mile is truly the meet's premiere event," Jordan said. "If Mary Slaney can be in it, it will be even better."

Hamilton and Plumer weren't expected to run in the meet, but Jordan got "a lot of luck" to bring the two into the race.

The newly-married Hamilton had been in Southern California and wanted a race in the United States after TAC before heading to Europe. Plumer was supposed to run in a 1,500-meter race in Germany this weekend but when that fell through, she agreed to run in the Prefontaine Classic.

Slaney, who had to withdraw from the TAC meet with a sore calf muscle, owns the top 1,500 time in the nation. Slaney will wait until today to make a decision on whether to run Friday night.

Also in the field are Darcy Arreola, the NCAA 1,500 champ and third-place finisher at TAC; Annette Peters, the 3,000-meter runner-up at TAC; Ceci St. Geme, fifth at TAC; Mozambique's Maria Mutola, from Springfield High School; and Liz Wilson.

"With PattiSue, Suzy and maybe Mary Slaney, it will be a terrific race, maybe the best

field of American distance runners ever running together," Jordan said. "You're looking at someone the quality of a Liz Wilson being the slowest person in the field, and that's pretty amazing."

The women's mile could upstage the men's two-mile where Joe Falcon has asked for a 4:05 rabbit pace for the first mile so he can attempt to break the world (8:13.45) and American records (8:17.12).

There are other incentives for Falcon as well. Jordan is offering a cash bonus of \$2,000 for breaking the American record and another \$3,000 if the world record falls. Falcon will also be trying to atone for a third-place finish in the TAC 1,500.

Despite his showing at TAC, Jordan believes Falcon is strong enough to break both records.

"Strength is more important in the two-mile," Jordan said. "There's a big difference between being beaten in a 100-meter sprint at the end of a mile or 1,500 and running an even pace of 61 seconds for virtually eight laps."

"The American record certainly could be broken, and a world record is not out of the question."

Joining Falcon in the two-mile are NCAA 5,000-meter and TAC 10,000 champ Shannon Butler and Rubeen Reina, the TAC 5,000 runner-up.

The best chance for a world record could come in the wheelchair mile where Springfield's Craig Blanchette is undoubtedly the favorite.

Blanchette has set world records each of the last two years at the Prefontaine Classic and will be trying to improve upon the 3:50.00 mark he set a year ago.

Blanchette has had a successful spring in which his only loss came at the Boston Marathon.

Off the track, the hammer and women's javelin competitions should offer plenty of excitement as well.

Jud Logan, Ken Flax and Lance Deal, the top three hammer finishers at TAC are in the field and all six of last year's top Americans — Logan, Flax, Deal, Jim Driscoll, Mike Fritchman and Oregon's Scott McGee — are in the field.

Karin Smith, the TAC winner who set a meet record of 211-6 in last year's javelin, is back to defend her title against Oregon's Paula Berry.

Berry, the NCAA champ, was second at TAC. She owns a season's-best of 202-1, just behind Smith's American-leading 203-7.

Kory Tarpenning will be back to defend his pole vault title. Collegiate record-holder Billy Payne of Baylor was a late scratch from the meet.

The meet kicks off at 6:30 p.m. with the hammer. The women's mile is scheduled for 8:45 with the men's two-mile the meet's final event at 9. The meet will be televised on a tape-delayed basis Saturday on cable station WTBS.

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