

Athletes qualify at Twilight meet

By Jake Berg and
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Emerald Sports Writers

It was called the Oregon Twilight, but it may have well been a preseason meet for the Olympic Trials.

Many faces seen at the Hayward Field meet will also pop up in a month at the trials in New Orleans. And many of them performed like Olympians.

Lance Deal made the biggest noise — figuratively and physically — when his hammer toss went 266 feet, second best in American history. The Eugene resident's throw was not only a personal best, it was also a Hayward and meet record.

Maria Mutola, a 19-year-old Springfield High School student, ran an Olympic qualifying time for her native country of Mozambique in the 1,500-meter run. Her meet record 4:07.50 was a personal best and topped Shelly Steely, who beat Mutola last year in the Twilight race.

"This time she was a little more seasoned," Steely said of Mutola. "If I'd just run 4:07, I'd be real confident now."

Mutola said she would like to double in the 800 and 1,500 at Barcelona, something she said was more of a dream a year ago. "Then I would have run a 4:26," Mutola said. "Now I've run a 4:07."

The other distance showdown featured Eugene residents Annette Peters and Mary Slaney squaring off in the 5,000. Peters won the event, which is her specialty, in a 15:27.6 — way ahead of Slaney's 15:52.5.

Peters said she immediately took the lead offered by Slaney,

who was competing outdoors for the first time this year, and was surprised to find she had beaten her by so much.

"I've been in races with her before, but I was never the one who was her competition," she said. "Confidence-wise, it's good."

"I definitely didn't want to take the lead," Peters said. "She just gave it to me, and I just said the heck with it. I just took it."

The Oregon women's track team got what it was looking for out of the Twilight — Pacific-10 Conference Championships qualifiers, said head coach Tom Heinonen.

Erika Klein and Kim Hutson finished 1-2 in 800-meter Pac-10 qualifying times for the Ducks. Neither had qualified for the event previously, and Klein, the Pac-10 runner-up last year, said that was all she was looking for in the event.

"I just wanted to qualify — that was the most important thing," said Klein, who won in 2:09.25. "It feels good to finally run where I want to be."

"That gives us a lot of latitude — just what we wanted," Heinonen said.

Heinonen said he was especially surprised with Monica Davidson and Amy Petrone, who both ran Pac-10 qualifying times in the 1,500.

The popular Twilight Mile was the highlight of the men's portion of the meet. Oregon's Shannon Lemora won the final event of the evening with a time of 4:04.01, a disappointing time for fans who were hopeful to see a sub-four-minute mile.

Oregon coach Bill Dellinger blamed a late start on the poor times.

"I wish the mile would have

started about a half-hour earlier," Dellinger said. "When it's this dark out, runners think they're running faster than they are. I think everyone in the race wishes the time would have been a little faster."

Not Lemora.

"I'm not disappointed with my time," Lemora said. "I haven't run the mile or the 1,500 much this year, so I think it was a good race for me."

Pat Haller improved on his NCAA provisional time with a 13:54.43 in the 5,000-meter race, and Rick Mestler fell a half-second short of an NCAA automatic qualifying time in the steeplechase.

"I would have liked to have been a half-second faster," Mestler said, "but I've got Pac-10s next week, and I think my time today will be good enough to get me into the NCAAAs."

"Haller ran a good race," Dellinger said, "but he needs to run better, and he knows it."

A crowd of 3,350 showed up for the meet, a number that pleased Dellinger.

"We had some good names and some good races," he said. "I was pleased with the amount of people that showed up."



Photo by Sean Poston

Annette Peters (right) took the win from Mary Slaney in the 5,000-meter run this weekend at Hayward Field's Oregon Twilight meet.

STELICK

Continued from Page 8

"I guess you'd call it successful," Stream said. "Our goal going in was to get 4,700 and place. She did one of the two."

Stellick went into the heptathlon with the lowest score of the nine competitors, but after two athletes were forced to withdraw because of injuries, Stellick's chances of scoring improved.

Washington's Sonja Forster, who as the fourth-place finisher last year was the top returner, won the competition in a PR of 5,266.

Although Stellick may not have been the best of the field over the weekend, her winning 149-10 javelin throw, which was a season best by more than six feet, is a new Pac-10 heptathlon record.

"I'm real happy with that

mark," Stellick said. "I just relaxed and threw."

The previous record throw of 148-2 was ironically held by former Duck heptathlete Stefanie Hunter, who was competing in the long jump Saturday as part of the Twilight Meet and often trains with Oregon.

Only the 1990 UCLA team was able to win a Pac-10 title without points in the heptathlon, indicating that Oregon's quest to repeat at Hayward Field this week may be difficult. Last year's league winners started the Pac-10 meet with points from heptathletes Kelly Blair and Kamala Kohlmeier, who finished second and fifth, respectively.

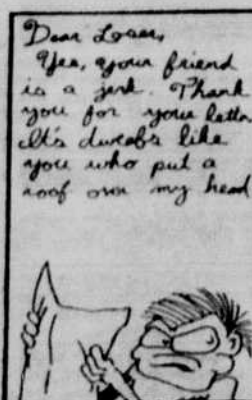
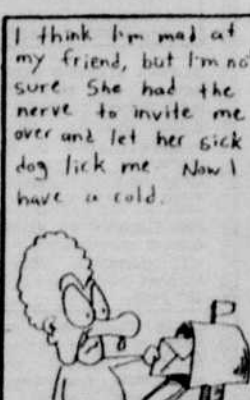
Stream said that if Blair hadn't redshirted this year, last year's runner-up would have probably taken the heptathlon title. Blair scored 5,404 points last season for second.

Weasel's World



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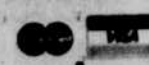
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