



Andre Cason (140), who was the national champion and was ranked second in the world at 100 meters last year, finished second to Jon Drummond (141) in the 100 at the Prefontaine Classic at Hayward Field on Saturday.

Croghan, Kennedy shine at Prefontaine meet

By Scott Simonson
Oregon Daily Emerald

The 20th annual Prefontaine Classic track meet provided some performances that the international track world will notice. Those performances weren't provided by Bubka and Mutola. They were provided by Mark and Bob.

Mark Croghan ran the fastest 3,000-meter steeplechase in the world this year, and Bob Kennedy was victorious in a record-setting field in the men's mile at Saturday's Prefontaine meet at Hayward Field.

The two stole some of the thunder from two of the world's dominant track athletes, pole vaulter Sergey Bubka and women's middle distance star Maria Mutola, but they didn't steal the show.

Bubka and Mutola made bids for world records at the meet. Both fell short in their attempts to rewrite record books, but both won their events and the continued adulation of the Hayward Field fans.

Bubka cleared 19 feet, 6.25 inches to set a meet record and win the pole vault. He made three attempts at 20 feet, 1.75 inches, a half-inch above the

world record and failed. "This is a beautiful stadium. It's such a nice crowd — they came to help me jump," Bubka said. "It is hard to jump for a world record in an empty stadium."

While Bubka made his second attempt at a world record and the crowd's attention and applause were focused on the pole vault runway, 18 runners circled the track in the Prefontaine Mile.

Nearly invisible to a crowd of 7,637, the milers ran a frenetic last lap. Bob Kennedy, displaying a kick that belonged in an 800-meter race, outsprinted the field in the final 200 meters and won the race.

But the rest were close behind. Although Kennedy's clocking of 3:56.21 didn't even break the meet record in the mile, the next 11 runners to cross the finish line broke the four-minute barrier.

According to meet organizers, 12 sub-four minute miles in a single race was the most ever in the United States.

Earlier in the meet, Mutola made her bid for a world record in the 1,000 meters. Mutola was two seconds shy of the world record at last year's Pre meet.

She was about three seconds off this time, finishing in 2:33.33.

"It was a little cold for me," Mutola said. "I think it is hard to sprint in this weather. I thought I would do a little better in the last 100 (meters), but I could feel that my legs were a little tight."

"I will be happy when I get the world record," she said. "I was happy with tonight."

While television cameras, reporters and autograph-seekers sought Mutola, Croghan was making a bid for a meet record in the steeplechase. His time of 8:21.76 didn't set a record. It was the best time in the world this year, although the international track season is still in its early stages.

In the men's 100 meters, two of the United States' top sprinters duelled to a tight finish. Jon Drummond defeated Andre Cason by two hundredths of a second in the race, with Drummond winning in 10.15 seconds.

Hammer thrower Lance Deal won easily in his event, although the winning mark by America's top-ranked hammer thrower was well off his season best. Deal threw 259 feet, 8 inches, which was 6 feet fewer his season best and 9 feet fewer the American record.

Suzy Hamilton ran at the heels of Annette Peters for most of the women's 2,000 meters, then ran away on the closing lap to win a battle between two of the nation's premier women distance runners.

Hamilton said it was the first time she had ever run a 2,000, so she chose to stay behind Peters and try to let someone else set the pace for the race. Peters apparently thought Hamilton was too close behind.

"There was a point in the race with about two laps to get where Annette turned and said 'Get off my heels,' and I was just kind of shocked," said Hamilton, who apologized to Peters after the race. "I did hit her heels, but it wasn't intentional. I'm just bad at running behind people."

Three local favorites won their respective events. Springfield's Craig Blanchette won the men's wheelchair mile in 3:37.51.

South Eugene High School's Bethany Lucas set a meet record in the high school girls' 800 meters with a time of 2:09.62. Junction City High School's Billy Harper won the high school boys' mile and also set a meet record with a time of 4:10.90.

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