

■ 1995 PREFONTAINE CLASSIC

PRE



Prefontaine was used to looking back at the pack in his brief career.

Trevor Kearney

Oregon Daily Emerald

Never before had an Oregon athlete been so revered, so sought after as he was. Never before had an Oregon athlete energized a sport like he did.

He brought a personality to the sport of track and field that earned him world-wide recognition, and stole the hearts of millions in the process.

He was the fiercest of competitors, the most determined of athletes and broke every American record in every race from the 2,000-meter race to the 10,000-meter race.

Steve Prefontaine was truly one in a million.

Before calling Hayward Field home from 1969 to 1973, Pre — as he came to be known — grew up in Coos Bay and dominated his competition at Marshfield High School. In his junior and senior years at Marshfield, Pre got himself off to a strong start as a distance runner, winning two state championships in the 2-mile race with record times of 9-minutes, 1.3-seconds and 8:41.5, respectively.

Prefontaine declared his intention to attend Oregon on Tuesday, April 29, 1969, thus starting one of the most illustrious careers in the history of track and field.

The Oregon years

With over 30 schools recruiting Pre, head coach Bill Bowerman was told by Walter McClure, a former Oregon track star and Pre's high school coach, that the stand-out was going to be a star.

"McClure told me 'You got to keep your eye on this little guy — he called him a little guy but he was actually pretty big for a distance runner — he is going to be something special,'" Bowerman recalled.

"He was a powerful runner," Bowerman said of Pre as a prospect. But that didn't change Bowerman's recruiting approach.

"I was never very big on recruiting. I did not recruit by kissing people's tails," Bowerman said.

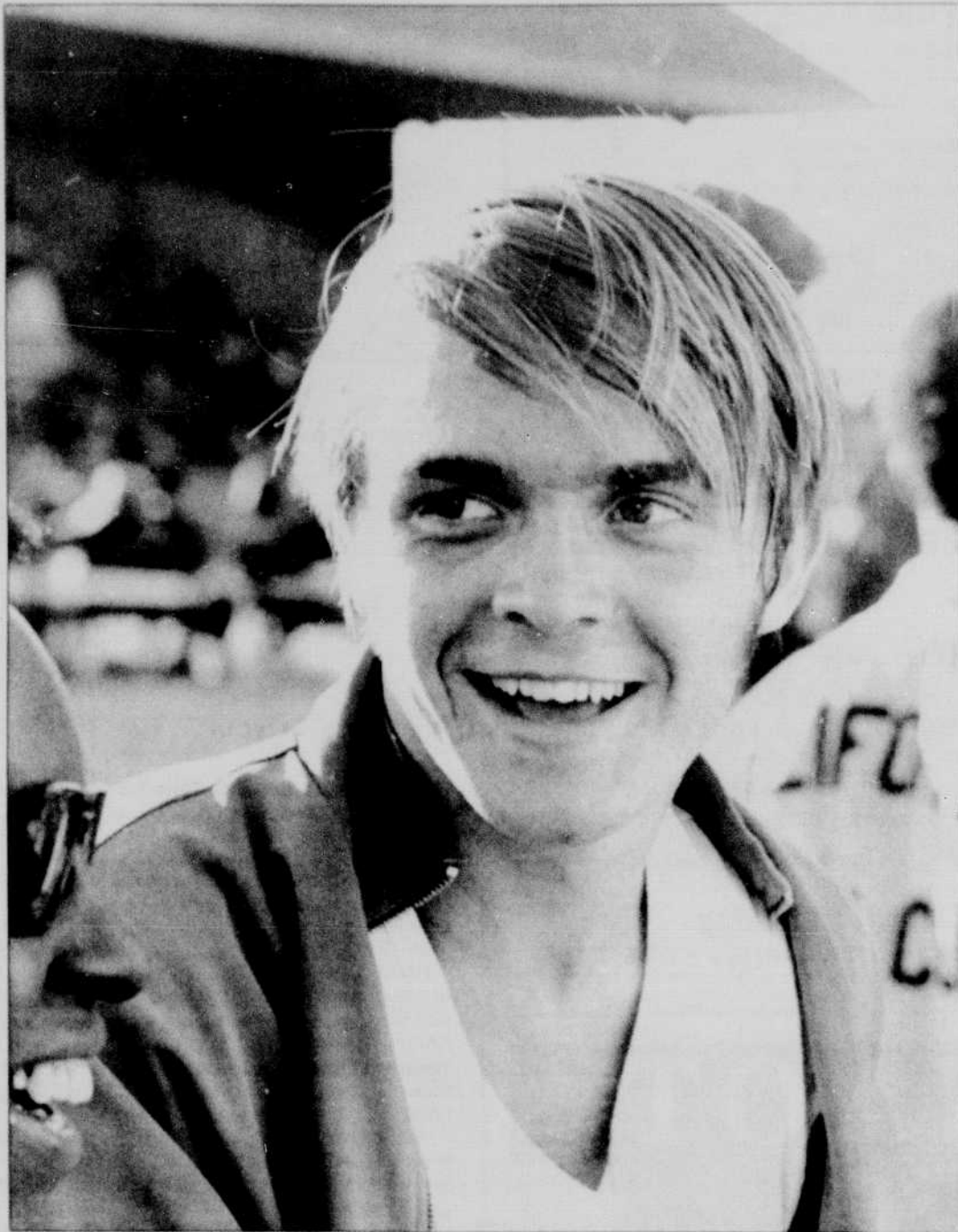
And Bowerman prevailed.

"I told him 'I would love to see you come here, but you come here for an education — and of course he did come here for an education, but he also came here to run,'" Bowerman said, adding that above any recruiting, Pre chose to come to Eugene. "Pre picked Oregon."

Pre's decision gave Bowerman a one in a million runner. It also gave him one of the most stubborn athletes that he ever coached.

"He was an absolutely fantastic runner, but he also a little bit bull-headed," Bowerman said.

Originally, Pre didn't want to run the 5,000-meter race, but Bowerman knew better. According to Bowerman, Pre



Pre was quick with a smile between his fiercely fought competitions.

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