

Records, crowd favorites drop at Prefontaine meet

■ **PREFONTAINE CLASSIC:** Johnson leads the way for a memorable day at Hayward Field.

By Ryan Frank
Freelance Sports Reporter

The Prefontaine Classic got off to a slow start Sunday morning.

But when Allen Johnson lined up for the 110-meter hurdles, nearly two hours after the meet's start, everything changed.

Johnson blazed his way to a world-leading 13.13 seconds to begin a record-setting second half of the meet in front of a Pre record 13,804 fans.

"I think it was message to the world that I am on my way back," Johnson said.

Prior to the 110 hurdles, the 22nd annual Pre Classic was plagued with mediocre performances, chilly weather and a malfunction in the automatic timing system.

World-record holder Sergey Bubka and American-record holder Scott Huffman highlighted the pole vault competition, which opened the meet at 9:30 a.m.

But both turned in disappointing performances. Bubka tied South African Okkert Brits with a jump of 18-8 1/4, well below his world record of 20-1 1/4, and Huffman tied with four other competitors for a third place finish at 18-2 1/2.

Following the 110 hurdles was the women's 1,500-meter run. Local runner Suzy Hamilton began the 1,500 as one of the favorites, but Maria Mutola proved too strong for her.

Mutola broke away from the pack to record a Prefontaine Classic record with a time of 4 minutes, 6.86 seconds.

Despite finishing second, Hamilton enjoyed running in front of the home crowd.

"It is just so amazing to run on my home track with the home crowd," Hamilton said. "I felt really comfortable and really relaxed."

In the men's one-mile run, David Kibet paced the pack with a time of 3:52.28. Ten runners followed Kibet to finish under the 4-minute mark.

High school standout Michael Stember finished ahead of 40-year-old Steve Scott with a time of 4:09.0.

After running in her hometown of Atlanta last weekend, 100-meter sprinter Gwen Torrence set a meet and Hayward Field record Sunday. Torrence raced to the

first sub-11 second 100-meter dash in Hayward Field history with a time of 10.96.

"I am very pleased about my time and the way I ran," Torrence said. "It was very good for me knowing that I ran under 11 seconds and that I ran under control."

Torrence had a hard time getting motivated after running in front of 40,000-plus in Atlanta last weekend.

"Last week was such an emotional race for me, it was kind of hard to get back up," Torrence said.

In the hammer throw, three-time NCAA national champion and current Southern Cal Trojan Balazs Kiss out tossed Lance Deal with a throw of 262-0 for the win. Deal finished second with a throw of 259-1.

In the women's 3,000-meter run, Sonia O'Sullivan recorded a time of 8:39.33, a new meet and field record. O'Sullivan, like many of the athletes in the Pre, enjoyed racing in front of the Eugene crowd.

"I really enjoyed it; it was great," O'Sullivan said. "I have never heard a crowd so loud in the last 100 meters. This is one of the best tracks ever."

Racing against O'Sullivan was local hero and ex-Olympian Mary Slaney.

"I wanted to stay with Sonia, but the first lap was a little faster than I should have been running at this point," Slaney said.

Coming into the race, Slaney had been hampered by a kidney infection.

"My legs were fine," Slaney said. "The biggest issue for me these past couple of weeks has been this kidney infection that I've had, and I was on some real nasty antibiotics."

Slaney finished fifth with a time of 8:51.14.

Two of the better races of the day were saved for last.

In the men's 200-meter dash, Carl Lewis was the sentimental favorite. But it was not meant to be, as Jon Drummond edged him out.

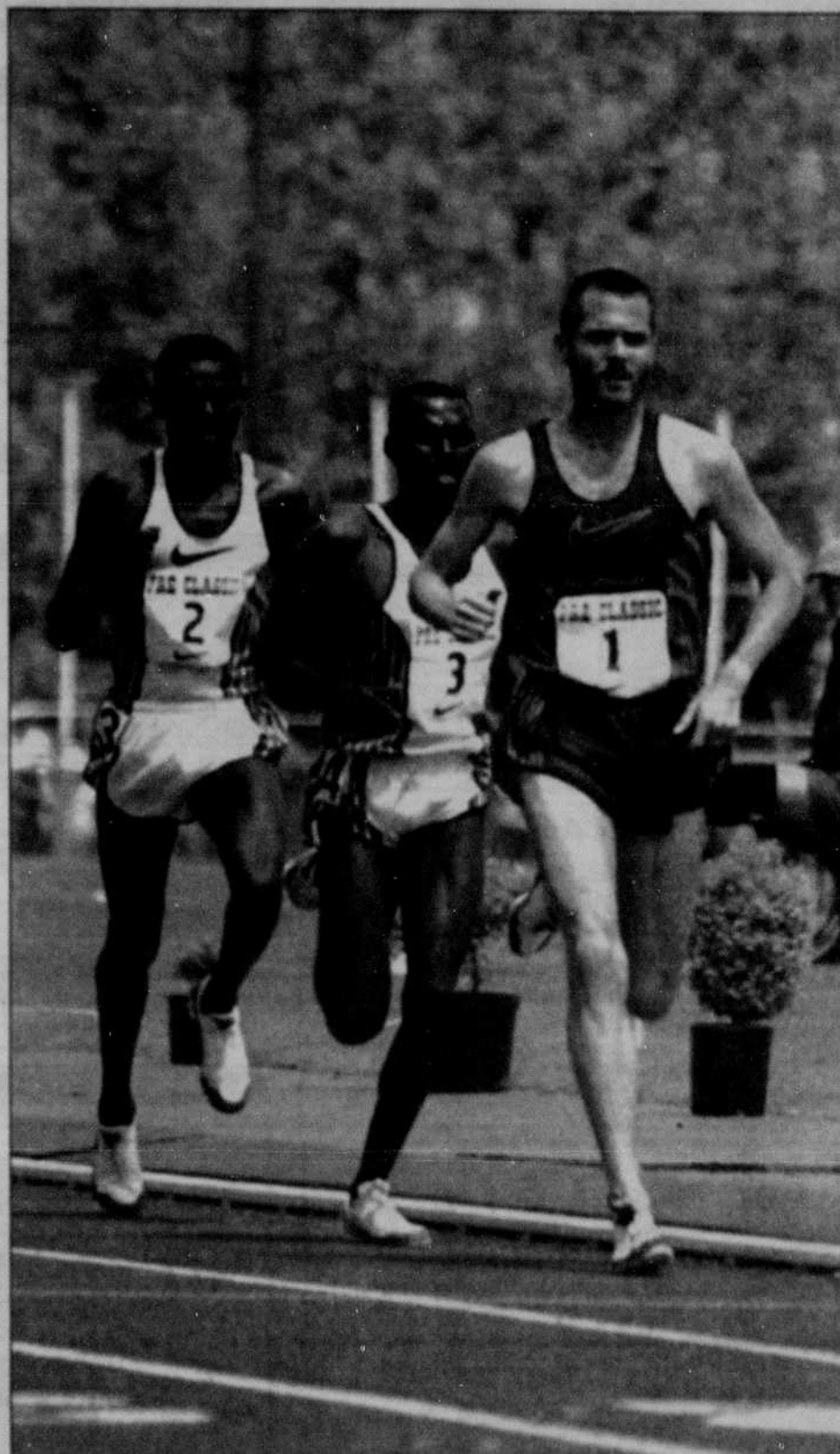
Drummond recorded a time of 20.20, and Lewis finished with a time of 20.22.

"He ran a good race," Lewis said of Drummond. "I didn't really get aggressive in the turn, and that was the difference in the race."

Lewis wasn't too worried about his second-place finish, however.

"One race doesn't make a season," Lewis

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ANDREW BRAKENSICK/Emerald

Bob Kennedy (right) led Paul Bitok (center) and Daniel Komen for most of the 5,000-meter run at the Prefontaine Classic. Bitok overtook Kennedy and won the race in 13:08.29.

Chicago comeback completes sweep

■ **NBA EAST:** The Bulls overcome an early drive from Orlando to advance to the NBA Finals

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — It's sweep revenge for Michael Jordan and a return trip to the NBA Finals for his Chicago Bulls.

The Bulls dethroned Orlando as Eastern Conference champions Monday, defeating the wounded Magic 106-101 behind 45 points from Jordan.

"We saw a challenge and faced a challenge," Jordan said. "In an every game a different guy stepped up. Today it was my turn."

The finals will begin Friday in Chicago if Seattle wraps up its Western Conference series against Utah on Tuesday night.

Jordan, who led the Bulls to titles in 1991, 1992 and 1993 before retiring, returned last season only to make numerous mistakes in a second-round loss to Orlando.

He has said that memories of that bitter defeat motivated him for this season, when he won his eighth scoring crown and fourth MVP and led Chicago to an NBA-record 72-victory season.

"Last year, I wasn't in a rhythm to do that for this team," Jordan said. "This year, I had a better understanding of the team, and they had a better understanding about myself."

After three below-average games this series, Jordan was sensational Monday. He was 16 of 23 from the floor, kept the Bulls in the game when they struggled in the first half and helped them overtake Orlando in the third quarter.

Now his Bulls are 11-1 in the playoffs and back in the finals for the fourth time in six years. And they have beaten the Magic seven straight times.

The Magic became the first team since the Chicago Stags (1948-50) to be swept from the playoffs three straight years. Orlando lost 3-0 to Indiana in the first round in 1994 and 4-0 to Houston in last year's finals.

But despite injuries that sidelined starters Nick Anderson and Horace Grant as well as top reserve Brian Shaw, the Magic played with heart and desire that many felt they lacked.

"They made this a very difficult series for us," said Scottie Pippen, who had just 12 points but eight assists. "But as a ballclub we stayed focused. We knew what we wanted to do and who we wanted to shut down."

Led by Shaquille O'Neal and Anfernee Hardaway, who finished with 28 points apiece, the Magic opened with a 15-4 burst and were still up 73-65 with 3 1/2 minutes left in the third quarter.

But the Bulls then went on a 15-3 run, with Dennis

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Payton proves value in first four games

■ **NBA WEST:** Seattle's point guard has gotten the better of his All-Star counterpart thus far in the Western Conference finals

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Through four games of the Western Conference finals, one thing has become clear: John Stockton can't be called the best point guard in the West anymore. It's Gary Payton's turn.

Stockton missed the game-winning shot Sunday as Seattle beat Utah 88-86 to take a 3-1 lead in the best-of-7 series, but it comes down to more than just one shot.

Payton has simply outplayed Stockton game after game, play after play. His 27-year-old legs are quicker and not as broken down, and his shot has been sweeter, be it from 3-point range or from underneath the basket.

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