

1998 PREFONTAINE CLASSIC

Pre Classic turns 24 this year

Hayward Restoration Meet was its first incarnation in 1973

By Rob Moseley
Sports Reporter

Begun in 1975 as a tribute to the former Oregon track luminary, the Prefontaine Classic on Sunday will reach the same age as the man it eulogizes each year.

Former Oregon Duck and four-time NCAA 5,000-meter champion Steve Prefontaine died in a car crash at the age of 24, one year before he was expected to vie for Olympic gold at the 1976 Games in Montreal. This weekend, for the 24th consecutive year, the Prefontaine Classic will honor the former Duck's memory by again fielding a world-class contingent of runners, jumpers and throwers.

The first incarnation of the "Pre" was run in 1973 under the title of Hayward Restoration Meet. That meet lasted two years and was a means of raising funds to build what is now the west grandstand.

In 1975, meet officials planned to hold the Bowerman Classic, in honor of former Oregon head coach Bill Bowerman. That all changed in May of that year, when Prefontaine's untimely death led officials to rename the meet in the distance star's honor.

The Prefontaine Classic has since risen to become one of the preeminent track and field events in the nation, and often the world.

Last year, the Prefontaine was the sole Grand Prix event run on U.S. soil, and this year it is one of just 16 such meets in the world. U.S. Track and Field officials have a second Grand Prix meet planned for July 25, but a meet site has yet to be determined.

Prefontaine Classic meet director Tom Jordan said the Pre was named the 16th-best meet in the world based on the quality of performances and the technical expertise of the meet officials, among other qualifications.

Jordan said he hopes this year's rendition of the meet will boost it into the world's elite.

"There will be about four or five meets that are untouchable, because they have million dollar budgets," Jordan said. "But we think this year's performance could put us in the top 10."

When asked to relate his favorite memories from his 15 years as Prefontaine Classic meet director, Jordan found it difficult to choose just one.

"There have been so many great moments with great athletes," Jordan said. "I love the middle and long distances, so Mary Slaney running the 5,000 in 1985 [was impressive]. It was rainy and dark, and she still ran a fast time."

Indeed, Slaney's 5,000-meter time of 15 minutes, 6.53 seconds in 1985 is still the Prefontaine Classic and Hayward Field records. Slaney is one of four women to have set track records in the Prefontaine Classic, having

also claimed the mile records in 1988 with a time of 4:21.25.

"In my opinion, Hayward Field is as world class as it gets," Slaney said. "I've raced all over the world in Olympics and World Championships, and the crowd here gets so into it. The Pre meet is the best outdoor track meet in the country. This is the sort of thing we train for."

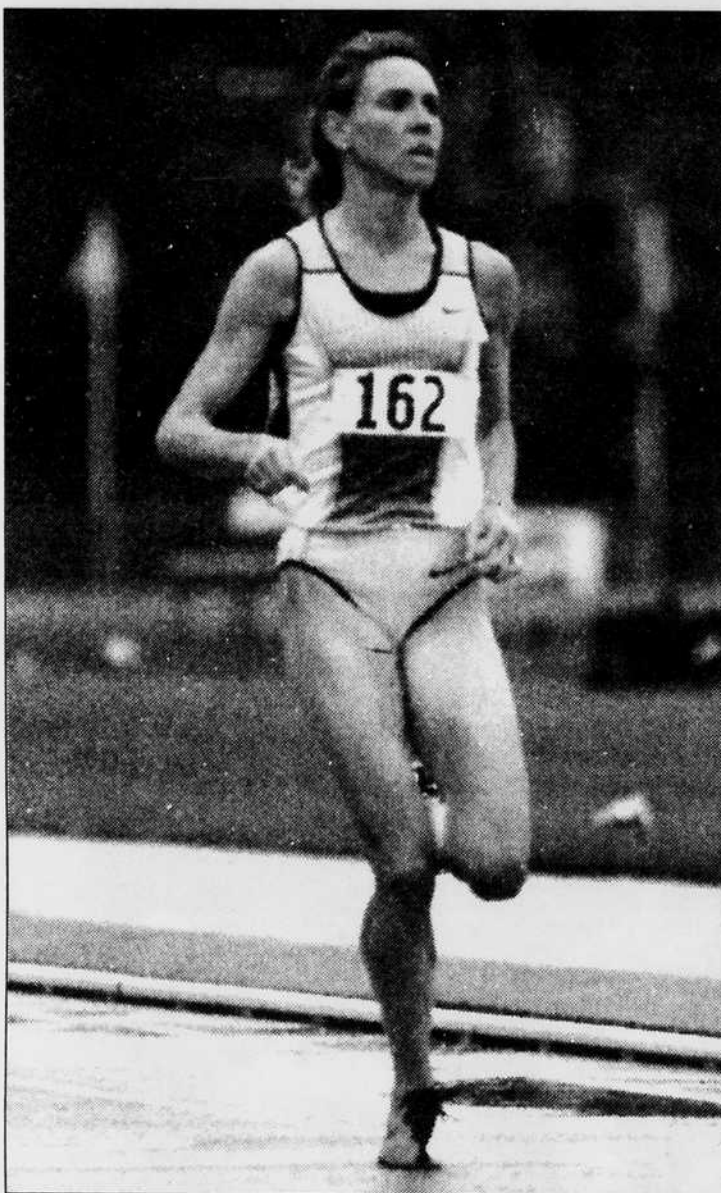
Other women who have set track records at the Pre include Gwen Torrence in the 100 meters (10.96, 1996), Ana Quirot in the 400 meters (50.14, 1989) and Maria Mutola in the 800 meters (1:57.57, 1997).

Slaney returns to the Pre this year for another 5,000, as does Mutola in the 800.

The men's side has also historically featured a myriad of Olympic gold medalists, with the high-water mark coming in 1996. That year, with the Atlanta summer games just weeks away, both 110-meter hurdler Allen Johnson and high jumper Charles Austin set meet records at the Pre on their way to winning Olympic gold in Georgia.

Among the other former gold medalists who have appeared at Hayward Field for past Prefontaine Classics are Carl Lewis and Michael Johnson, who hold meet records in the 100 and 200, respectively, 400-meter hurdler Kevin Young, pole vaulter Sergei Bubka and triple jumper Kenny Harrison.

Both Allen and Michael Johnson will be in Eugene for the Pre this weekend.



NICK MEDLEY/Emerald

Former Olympian Mary Slaney holds Prefontaine Classic meet records in both the mile and 5,000-meters runs.

Prefontaine Classic records

Men

100 Meters — 10.08, Carl Lewis, 1986
200 Meters — 20.15, Michael Johnson, 1995
400 Meters — 44.13, Derek Mills, 1995
800 Meters — 1:44.62, Johnny Gray, 1996
1,000 Meters — 2:14.54, Joaquim Cruz, 1984
1,500 Meters — 3:36.35, Tom Byers, 1981
Mile — 3:52.28, David Kibet, 1996
3,000 Meters — 7:39.22, Bob Kennedy, 1997
Steeplechase — 8:18.57, Amos Korir, 1981
Two Mile — 8:14.53, Bob Kennedy, 1995
5,000 Meters — 13:08.29, Paul Bitok, 1996

10,000 Meters — 27:57.49, Mark Nenow, 1984
110-Meter High Hurdles — 13.13, Allen Johnson, 1996
400-Meter Hurdles — 48.59, Kevin Young, 1993
High Jump — 7-7, Charles Austin, 1996
Pole Vault — 19-6 1/4, Sergey Bubka, 1994
Long Jump — 27-6, Joe Greene, 1992
Triple Jump — 56-2, Kenny Harrison, 1988
Shot Put — 70-7 1/2, Al Feuerbach, 1974
Discus — 234-0, Ben Plunknett, 1983
Hammer — 266-0, Lance Deal, 1996
Javelin — 260-11, Duncan Atwood, 1997

Women

100 Meters — 10.96, Gwen Torrence, 1996
200 Meters — 22.73, Inger Miller, 1997
400 Meters — 50.14, Ana Quirot, 1989
800 Meters — 1:57.57, Maria Mutola, 1997
1,000 Meters — 2:32.33, Maria Mutola, 1995
1,500 Meters — 4:06.35, Sonia O'Sullivan, 1997
Mile — 4:21.25, Mary Slaney, 1988
2,000 Meters — 5:38.80, Annette Peters, 1992
3,000 Meters — 8:39.33, Sonia O'Sullivan, 1996
5,000 Meters — 15:06.53, Mary Decker, 1985
10,000 Meters — Not yet contested

100-Meter Hurdles — 12.84, Gail Devers, 1995
400-Meter Hurdles — 55.10, Tonja Buford, 1996
High Jump — 6-5, Debbie Brill, 1982
Long Jump — 21-3 1/4, Yelena Pershina, 1992
Triple Jump — Not yet contested
Shot Put — 60-4 1/2, Ramona Pagel, 1986
Discus — 212-11, Lisa Marie Viziani, 1996
Javelin — 211-6, Karin Smith, 1990

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