

# The Pre's stacked; can you dig?

■ From Marion Jones' flair to Jeff Hartwig's pole vault, the Classic offers a range of spectacular athletes

By Jeff Smith  
Oregon Daily Emerald

To steal a phrase from Nike's latest commercial star, Marion Jones, "The more the better, can you dig?"

The city of Eugene certainly is digging the fact that it's the site of the prestigious Prefontaine Classic Grand Prix, which seemingly gets better and better each and every year.

This year's theme — the 26th installment of the Pre — could easily be, "The more Olympians, the better," because the field is stacked.

You want speed?

Well then, you better watch the men's 200 meters at 12:06 p.m. on Saturday because former Olympic 200 gold medalist Michael Marsh is healthy and ready to burn some Hayward Field rubber. His main target will be the scintillating Maurice

Green, who is currently the world's record-holder in the 100-meter.

At last year's Pre Classic, Green electrified the crowd by doubling in the 100 and 200 meter races — the second straight year he'd done so. He then pranced around the track joyfully tossing T-shirts of himself to the crowd.

Perhaps you want some quality field events?

Then be sure to catch the men's pole vault at 11:45 a.m., where you'll see American record holder Jeff Hartwig attempt to set a new Pre Classic meet record of 19 feet, 6 1/4 inches. He already set a record vault of 19-9 at Hayward Field during last June's USA Track and Field Championships, which means legendary Sergey Bubka's Pre mark is in serious jeopardy.

"I'm jumping really well," Hartwig said. "I'm looking forward to coming back to Eugene."

Maybe you want to be impressed with an athlete excelling in both a field and track event?

If that's your question, then

Jones is your answer. The former North Carolina hoopster will be competing in the women's 100 meter dash at 12:14 a.m. and then the long jump at 12:37 p.m.

The Pre Classic will be just a stop on the way to gold for "Mrs. Jones" as she is setting a goal to win medals in five different events at the Olympics in September.

Why are so many world class athletes so eager to be a part of the Pre? Because of the atmosphere, the facilities and the competition. It is an extreme privilege for these athletes to be invited to the Pre — especially since in order to even be considered to receive an invite, an athlete must have ranked in the top 50 in the world in his or her event during the past year.

"There's no place like Hayward Field and no meet quite like the Pre," Olympic silver medalist and Eugene resident Lance Deal said. "You've got people here that care about the field events just as much as they do the track events. The Prefontaine always ranks amongst the top in terms of athlete satisfaction."

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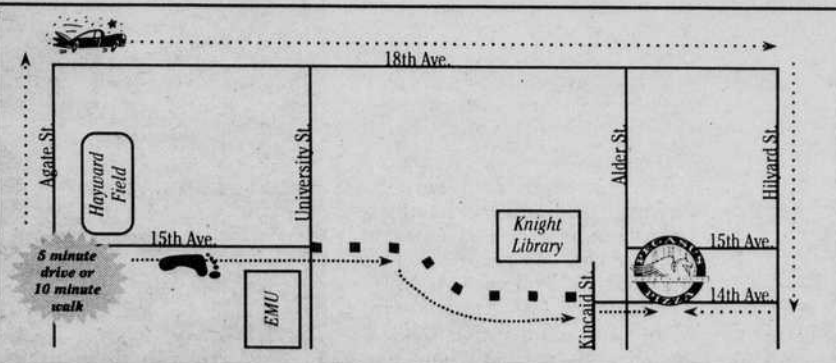
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