

Pre looks to make more history this weekend

■ Since its troubled start in 1973, the Pre Classic has grown into the most popular track and field event in the country

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

The emergence of the Prefontaine Classic into the international spotlight has not been an easy one.

Originally, when it was established by the Oregon Track Club in 1973, the Pre was called the Hayward Restoration Meet and was intended to raise funds to build what is now the west grandstand.

After two years, meet officials decided to change the name to the Bowerman Classic in honor of former Oregon head coach Bill Bowerman. But before the Bowerman meet was held, tragedy struck.

“It’s the only annual sports event [in Eugene] that’s televised on a network. It has a huge impact on how people perceive Eugene.”

Tom Jordan
meet director

Steve Prefontaine, a four-time NCAA champion in the 5,000-meter run, died in a car crash on Friday, May 30, 1975, just hours after running the second-fastest 5,000-meter time in American history (second to his own record of 13:22.8).

Eight days later, 8,500 fans watched seven world record-holders compete in the first Prefontaine Classic at Hayward Field.

Thousands have watched, in the stands and on their televisions, as many athletes tried to mimic Prefontaine’s all-out desire when rounding the Bowerman curve at Hayward. Though they have tried,

not even the likes of Carl Lewis, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Michael Johnson, Maurice Greene, Marion Jones and countless other track and field stars have lived up to Pre’s heroics.

Regardless, they come back for the memories and stay for the one-of-a-kind excitement.

This year’s 27th annual Pre Classic will feature Greene (100 meters), Jones (200 meters), Gail Devers (100-meter hurdles), Hicham El Guerrouj (mile) and Maria Mutola (800 meters), just to name a few.

The meet, which begins at 11:45 a.m. Sunday, will be broadcast live on Fox Sports Net.

“It’s the only annual sports event [in Eugene] that’s televised on a network,” meet director Tom Jordan said. “It has a huge impact on how people perceive Eugene.”

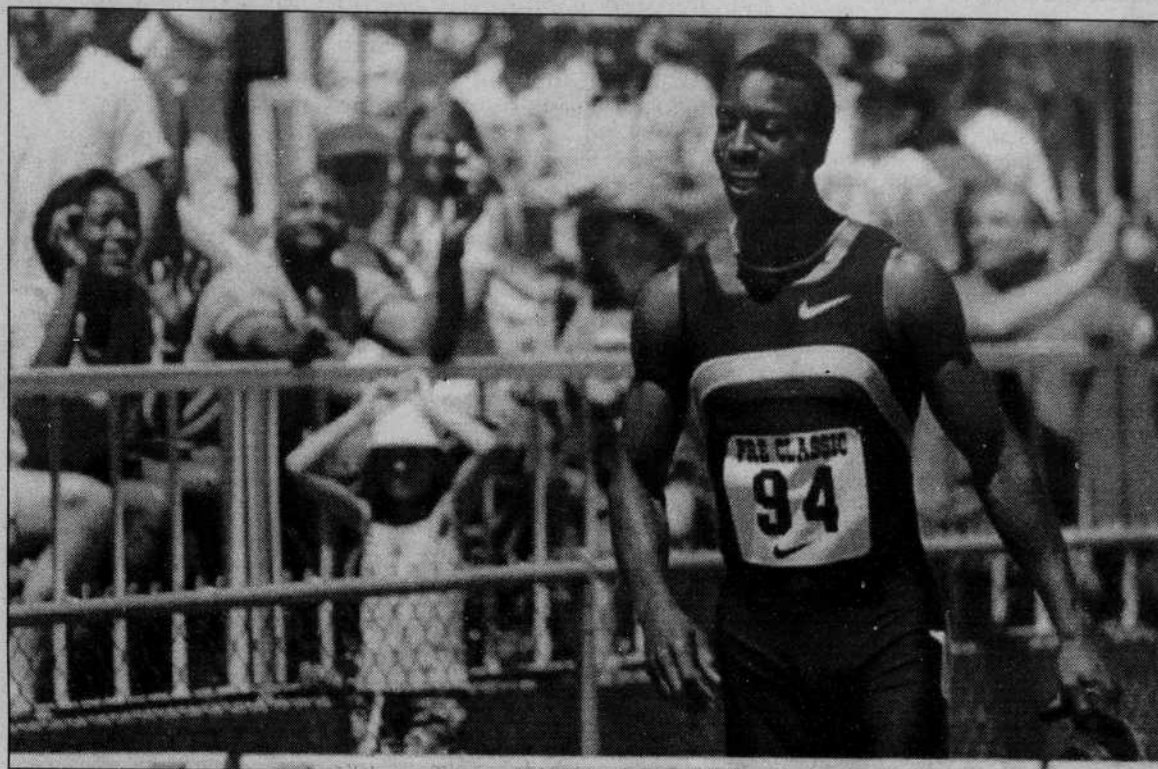
The Pre will be the first International Amateur Athletic Federation Grand Prix event held on American soil this year, and one of three all year. The event first became a Grand Prix event in 1996.

“In my opinion, Hayward Field is as world-class as it gets,” said Mary Slaney, the Prefontaine record-holder in the 5,000 meters, set in 1985. “I’ve raced all over the world in the 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.”

The Pre’s success, however, is only a recent trend.

Struggling to keep the meet afloat in the years following Prefontaine’s death, the Classic had a budget of just \$6,000 in 1979. Conflicting with the NCAA Championships, which were held around the same time, the Oregon Track Club moved the Pre Classic to late summer in the early ‘80s in an effort to attract more European talent.

The move failed, however, and the meet folded, only to have its name picked up by Pat Holleran, a local distance runner, who started



Michael Johnson, who is not competing this weekend, is the world and Prefontaine Classic record-holder in the 200 and 400 meters.

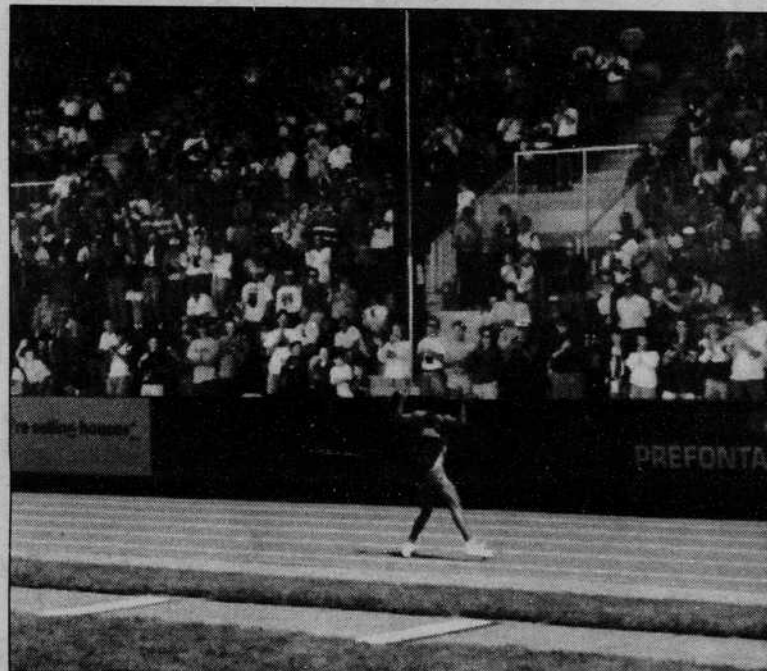
the Hayward Classic in the Pre’s old time slot at the beginning of the summer.

With the support of a \$7,000 sponsorship from Nike, Holleran began bringing in more high-profile athletes and in 1981, about 7,000 fans came to watch the meet, the most since Prefontaine’s death.

“It was never in danger of failing, but there certainly was a point where it was struggling to survive,” said Jordan, who became the meet director in 1984. “Now, it’s like being on the mountain top and looking down. It’s never been as good as it is now.”

Today, with an annual budget of about a half-million dollars, the Prefontaine Classic is considered by many to be one of the world’s top 10 track and field events.

The track to international respectability was a bumpy one, but the view on the sky sure looks nice now.



Fan support at Hayward Field is key to the success of the Pre Classic.

To earn a 4.00 in Brewology all you need to know is STEELHEAD.

- 9 Award-Winning Micro-Brews
- Soups, Salads Ribs Fresh Pizza
- Sandwiches Pastas Burgers
- Spirits Home-Made Rootbeer

TAKE A BREW HOME IN STEELHEAD’S BOX O’ BEER

Steelhead Brewing Company
199 East 5th Avenue Eugene, OR Phone 686-2739
Eugene, OR - Burlingame, CA - Fisherman’s Wharf, San Francisco, CA - Irvine, CA

Locally owned & operated

Go Ducks!

We Bake. We Deliver.

<p>S. Eugene & U of O 30 W. 29th Ave. 484-PAPA (7272)</p>	<p>Springfield, Ducks & Chase Village, University Commons 1402 Mohawk Blvd. 746-PAPA (7272)</p>	<p>Santa Clara/River Rd. /Bethel/Danebo 54 Division St. 461-PAPA (7272)</p>
---	---	---

“Papa-Size It” – 30% more pizza only \$2!

<p>PAPA’S COMBO</p> <p>ONE LARGE 2-TOPPING PIZZA With FREE 2-Liter of Coca Cola</p> <p>\$10⁹⁹ only Expires 6/15/01</p> <p><small>Not valid with any other offer or special. Additional toppings extra.</small></p>	<p>2 GOOD 2 BE TRUE!</p> <p>TWO LARGE 2-TOPPING PIZZAS</p> <p>\$14⁹⁹ only Expires 6/15/01</p> <p><small>Not valid with any other offer or special. Additional toppings extra.</small></p>	<p>PAPA’S CHOICE</p> <p>ONE LARGE PIZZA With up to 5 toppings</p> <p>\$11⁹⁹ only Expires 6/15/01</p> <p><small>Not valid with any other offer or special. Additional toppings extra.</small></p>
--	---	--