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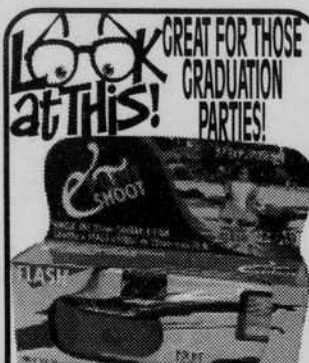
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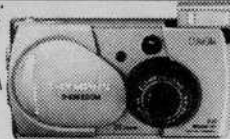
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At last year's Prefontaine Classic, Bernard Williams (4) and Maurice Greene (1) battled to the finish of the 100. Williams will be back this year defend his title in the 200, but Greene won't return to Hayward Field. The men's field is strong despite the absence of Greene.

Balanced Prefontaine Classic aims to thrill Hayward crowd

■ Sunday's competition will showcase talented runners, jumpers and throwers alike

By Peter Hockaday
Oregon Daily Emerald

Grrr, baby.
Very grr.

Most of the focus of Sunday's Prefontaine Classic will be on one man, Hicham El Guerrouj, as the international superstar focuses on breaking the world mile record.

But the star-studded fields in other events might be just as good, and meet director Tom Jordan knows how important that balance is.

The mile will only last four minutes, after all.

"We really want to see the crowds come back for the regular-season meets because we want track to be healthy here," Jordan said.

The first step is a deep, talented

Pre Classic. Beyond the mile, the fields in the men's high jump, 400-meter race, 100-meter race 110 hurdles and pole vault should help the meet live up to its billing as one of the top track meets in the United States.

In the high jump, all the competitors have equaled or bettered the Prefontaine Classic record of 7 feet 8 inches. The field is led by Sweden's Staffan Strand, the indoor world leader who jumped 7-8 1/2 in February.

Strand "is one of the top jumpers in the world right now," Jordan said.

Enigmatic star Allen Johnson returns for a run in the 110 hurdles, on the same track where he won the 2001 U.S. title in the event. Johnson went on to win the world title to add to his 1996 Olympic gold medal.

Johnson will face a tough field that includes Larry Wade, the third-ranked hurdler in the world

and the one man who has matched Johnson's Pre Classic record of 13.12 seconds.

While the hurdles have an American flavor, the 400 should have a decidedly international air. Six of the world's top-10 runners will compete in the event, and three of those six are from outside American borders. The top-rated runner is Jamaica's Gregory Haughton, ranked second in the world in the event. Not far behind is U.S. runner Antonio Pettigrew, who is ranked fourth internationally and won the 400 at the 2001 U.S. Championships.

In the 100, Americans Tim Montgomery and Shawn Crawford couldn't be closer. In every way. The two sprinters share the fastest 2002 international time at 9.94 seconds and have split the two times they've faced each other. At the 2001 U.S.

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