



Emerald

Gail Devers (130) returns to the Prefontaine Classic after finishing second in the 100 hurdles in 2001. The former UCLA star holds the American (12.33) and Prefontaine Classic (12.64) records in the event.

Jones, Devers, Dragila headline women's field

■ The 28th annual Prefontaine Classic is set to go with some of the world's best athletes

By Hank Hager
Oregon Daily Emerald

They are the "Who's Who" of world-class athletes.

They've won gold medals, earned world-record holding times, and have jumped further and higher than any women before them.

And for the 28th version of the Prefontaine Classic Grand Prix, they will come to Eugene as competitors, hoping to energize the Hayward Field crowd.

They are Stacy Dragila, world-record holder in the pole vault; Gail Devers, former Pacific-10 Conference standout and world-renown runner; and Sandie Richards, one of the top high school athletes in the nation.

But then, to make the list of athletes even more impressive, you have one of the world's most respected and well-known athletes in the world. Marion Jones will return to the Prefontaine to defend her 2001 title in the 100.

Jones will be competing in her fifth Prefontaine Classic, winning the 100, 200, and long jump twice. Jones has never lost an event she has competed in at the Prefontaine.

With so many of the world's finest athletes in so close of quarters, does this sound like the Olympics?

"Any time you have the world record holder, it makes a difference.

She will push the others."

Tom Jordan
meet director on Stacy Dragila,
the world record holder
in women's pole vault

"In terms of the quality of the field, it's very close," meet director Tom Jordan said.

First, there's Dragila, the world record holder in the pole vault. It had been expected that the indoor world record holder Svetlana Feofanova would descend upon Hayward to challenge Dragila, but that

has now changed due to the Russian's inability to stay healthy.

Now, in a field that features four other women who have cleared the 15-foot mark — the required height for entrance into the classic — Dragila is still the woman to beat.

"Any time you have the world record holder, it makes a difference," Jordan said. "She will push the others."

But then, the Eugene crowd will have a chance to see one of the most respected, and most successful, athletes in the world.

Devers, former UCLA star and the 2001 Prefontaine Classic runner-up in the 100 hurdles, returns to the field as the best bet in the event.

But Devers means more to Jordan and the Eugene crowd than just as a competitor. Devers is a living legend, a type of athlete that excels at the highest and most competitive meets, and comes around just once in a while.

"You want to make sure you see an athlete like that," Jordan said, "because you never know when she might hang 'em up."

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