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Oregon Daily Emerald

Jones brings big-name presence to Pre Classic

Tom Jordan pulled a coup on Wednesday.

Jordan got Marion Jones to come back to the Prefontaine Classic Grand Prix for a fifth time, and the athlete, revered as one of the fastest women in the world,

will run the 100 at Hayward Field on Sunday.

Jordan got his big catch, bringing her back to the big pond.

And he made us all think she was going to sit at home and watch the Pre Classic on ESPN2 (tape-

delayed at 8 p.m. on Sunday, much less).

When it was announced that Maurice Green wouldn't be returning to Hayward after giving the Eugene fans something to cheer about last season, the thought of having the 28th version of one of the nation's most prestigious meets without the big name was kind of scary.

Hicham El Guerrouj and Stacy Dragila are big names in the track and field world and have been to the Prefontaine before. Former UCLA star Gail Devers is also an entrant, and she should remind some of Oregon's older fans of the

good old days of track in the Pacific-10 Conference.

But Jones is in a world all by herself.

Jones is known to American fans as the woman who made it all happen in Sydney, Australia. She won an unprecedented five medals in the 2000 Olympics — gold in the 100, 200, 4x400, and bronze in the long jump and 4x100 — garnering athlete of the year honors from the Associated Press, ESPN and Reuters.

And Jordan made us all think she wouldn't want to give the Hayward crowd something to cheer about.

Bravo Tom, bravo.

Before Jones was winning all those medals overseas, she had already made a name for herself in Track Town, U.S.A. In fact, since she graduated from North Carolina in 1997, Jones has never missed a Prefontaine.

And she's done something that no one, in the 28 years of the Classic, could imagine. Jones is six-for-six at the fabled meet.

Think about that for a second: Six-for-six. Six-for-six in a meet that seemingly attracts more and more talent each year.

Jones has never lost at Hayward Field. Every single time she has stepped foot in front of the green-colored grandstands, she has come up big.

That equals two 100 titles, two 200 titles and two more titles in the long jump.

Um, wow.

Now, let's get back to Jordan's announcement Wednesday that Jones would be joining Dragila and Devers as headliners at the meet.

The announcement was done without any fanfare. It was posted on www.preclassic.com and sent out to the media as a discrete e-mail. It was an announcement that came in under the radar, so to speak.

It was pure genius.

It was something that wouldn't draw away from the enormity of the meet itself. After all, Steve Prefontaine was one of the most inspirational athletes in the last half-century, and to draw away from the meet that honors him would have been a disgrace.

But to the media, it was an announcement that shows the Pre Classic is continuing its reign. To be the best meet, you need the best athletes, and Jordan knows that. More importantly, he has shown that.

Only Jordan and Jones know how long she has been signed up to run at Hayward, but one would guess that it may have been awhile, and that Jordan, the director of the meet, was holding out as to create more suspense.

That doesn't matter, though, as just getting Jones to Hayward was a coup in itself.

E-mail sports reporter Hank Hager at hankhager@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



**Hank
Hager**
Behind the Dish

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