

Tuesday, May 27, 2003

Women shine with world, Pre records

The women set high track and field standards at Saturday's Pre Classic at Hayward Field

Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

The 29th annual Prefontaine Classic had its typical flair Saturday afternoon under gloomy skies and humid temperatures.

Nearly every event set the top marks in the world this year. And it wouldn't be the Pre Classic if bigger records weren't broken along the way.

The women's 1,500 meter race, the first running event, set the stage. Slovenia's Jolanda Ceplak outkicked Suzy Favor Hamilton in the final 200 meters for a 4 minute, 2 second finish.

Ceplak's time was the fastest in the world by seven seconds this year. Favor Hamilton, a former Eugene native, finished second in 4:03.47, but wasn't disappointed.

"I'm really quite pleased with today, it felt really really good," Favor Hamilton said. "Most of the world times are under four minutes but it's a great time to start off."

Kelli White of the United States impressed as the only women in the 100 meter dash to run under 11 seconds. White's time of 10.96 leads the world this year.

Chryste Gaines, an Olympic gold medalist, finished second in 11.03.

The 100 meter high hurdles consisted of a star-studded field from the USA and Jamaica. Jamaica's Brigitte Foster crossed the line first in 12.45, a new Hayward Field and Pre Classic record.

Foster's time also broke her previous Jamaican national record by .04 seconds.

"Technically it was a great race and I have to be grateful for that," Foster said. "I was hoping to run around 12.5 and that would be satisfactory. My start has improved dramatically from last year, and I think that is what made the difference."

Gail Devers, who set the Hayward Field and Prefontaine Classic record at 12.64 in 2000, struggled while recovering from an injury. Devers finished eighth in 13.06.

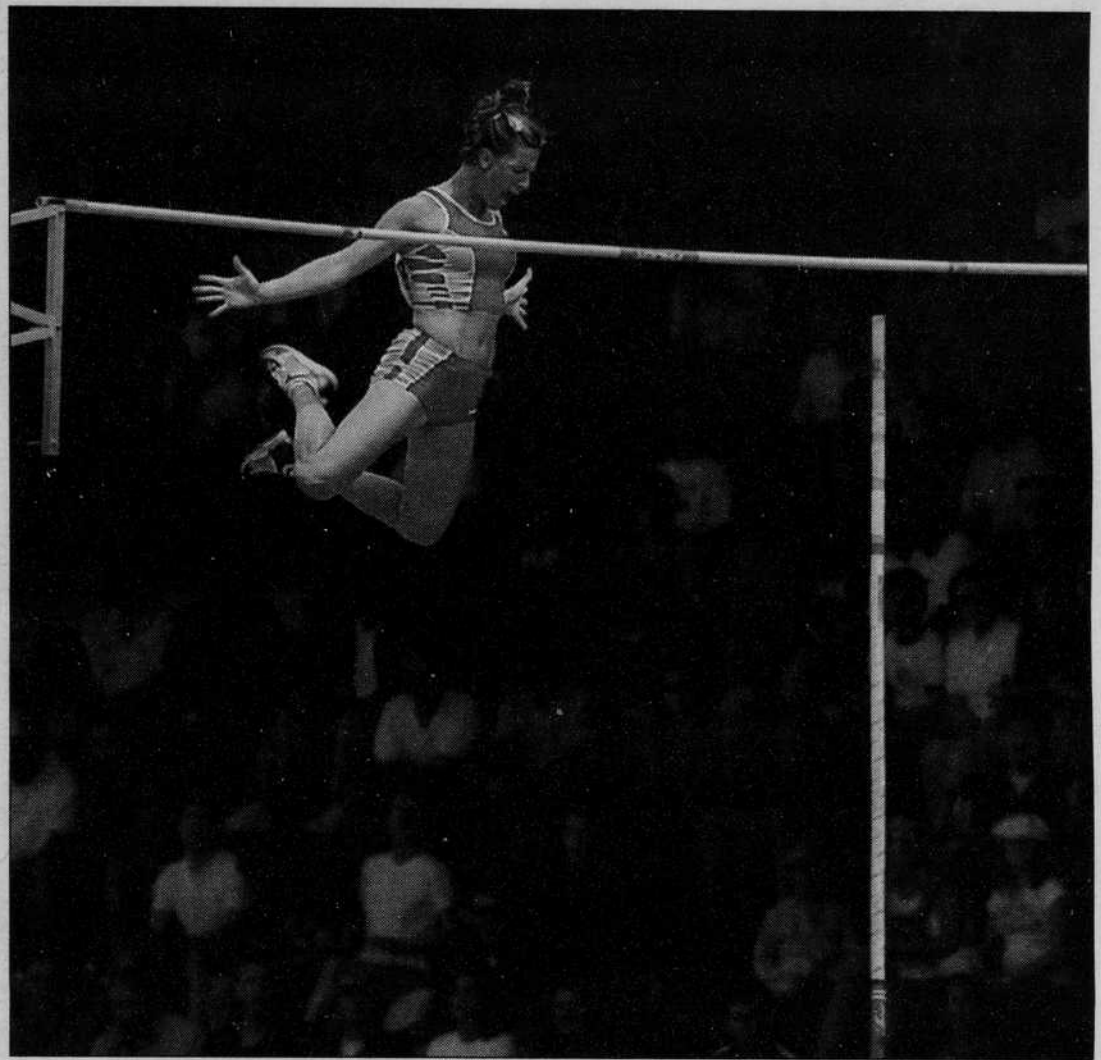
Maria Mutola of Mozambique owned the 800 meter field again as she has for the past 12 years. Mutola's time of 1:57.98 nearly broke her own Hayward record of 1:57.57, but it was still the fastest time in the world this season by two seconds.

American record holder Jearl Miles-Clark was mere moments behind in 1:58.61, which leads the USA this season.

Mexico's Ana Guevara had her own fan club as she crossed the 400 meter finish line in 49.34. Guevara's time was the first ever sub-50 second time run at Hayward field, breaking Cathy Freeman's record (50.02) set in 1998.

"All the history of the Prefontaine Classic, it is a wonderful place for running and the track is very fast too," Guevara said. "I feel very good in the race."

Stacy Dragila was victorious in the women's pole vault for the third straight year. Dragila owns the world, American, Hayward Field and Pre Classic records in the event.



Mark McCambridge Emerald

Stacy Dragila overcame a loss to Svetlana Feofanova at the World Indoors to beat Feofanova at the Prefontaine Classic.

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Pre Classic men put on a show at Hayward Field

Kevin Toth and two Oregon hurdlers provide highlights at Saturday's premier meet

Peter Hockaday
Sports Editor

It started with a 300-pound hurdling man, it ended with a blistering final mile lap, and in between, the men of the 2003 Prefontaine Classic wowed the Hayward Field crowd on Saturday.

Kevin Toth opened the action with a win in the shot put, the meet's first event. Toth threw 71 feet, 4 3/4 inches on his second throw and fouled the rest of his five tosses, but it was enough to

edge Missouri's Christian Cantwell. On his victory lap, the jovial Toth jumped two hurdles as they were being set up for the women's 100-hurdle race.

"What was my time?" he jokingly asked the media afterward.

The shot put competition wasn't nearly as exciting as last year's, when Toth battled fellow American stars Adam Nelson and John Godina to a dramatic finish and Toth won with a Hayward Field record of 72-09 3/4. Both Nelson and Godina pulled out of this year's Pre Classic the week before the event.

Toth said he just loves the Pre and

wouldn't miss it for the world.

"This place is magical," Toth said. "This crowd is so awesome. They can take you from a down situation to being up."

The men's track events got under way after the shot put ended, with Tyree Washington taking first in the 400 meters with a nation-leading time of 44.70 seconds. Washington, who recently won the Indoor World Championship in the 400 meters, signed with Oregon as a football player in 1996, but was forced to refuse the Ducks' scholarship because of academic reasons. Now he's one of the premier 400 run-

ners in the world.

In the 110 hurdles, top-ranked hurdler Larry Wade won in a blistering 13.24 seconds. Oregon record holder and recent graduate Micah Harris finished fifth in 13.69, while current Duck freshman Eric Mitchum finished eighth with a near personal best of 13.84 seconds.

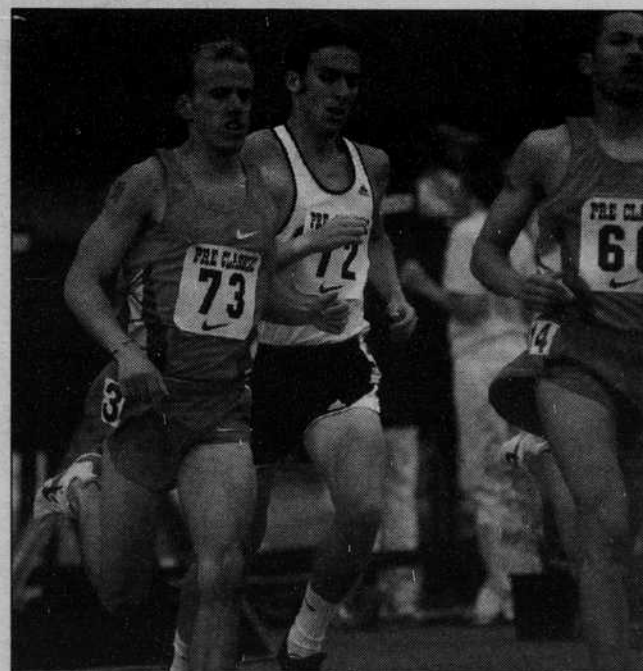
"He's going to be a great hurdler," Harris said of Mitchum. "To get into this meet and race against these guys is going to be great for him down the line."

In the 100 meter dash, Kim Collins of St. Kitts and Nevis used the absence of some of the world's best runners to

take the 100 crown in 10 seconds, tying the Pre Classic record. American stars Maurice Greene and Tim Montgomery were both absent and Britain's Dwain Chambers, who holds the world's second-fastest time, was absent from contention. He finished fourth in 10.17 seconds.

Collins, who also won the 100 meters at last week's Oregon Track Classic in Portland, won at the Pre despite a hitch in his travel plans. His plane didn't touch down in Eugene until midnight on Friday, and Collins didn't get to his hotel until later that

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Danielle Hickey Emerald

Steve Magness (72) couldn't duplicate the Pre feats of Alan Webb (73).

High schoolers miss marks in mile

Mike McGrath and Steve Magness can't run under four minutes but prove they belong among the best at the Prefontaine Classic

Hank Hager
Sports Reporter

Running the mile at Saturday's Prefontaine Classic, Alan Webb had the opportunity to look over and see two high school track stars in the lanes next to him.

For Webb, seeing Lincoln High School's Mike McGrath of Oregon and Steve Magness of Klein Oak High School in Texas was an opportunity to bring back memories of his high school days. Two years ago, at the 27th annual Pre Classic, Webb, who went to South Lakes High School in Reston, Va., took fifth in the event with a surprising time of 3:53.43.

Saturday, McGrath and Magness didn't quite hit the same mark, but still

earned praise from the former high school phenom.

"They've got great collegiate careers ahead of them," said the former Michigan runner. "Only good things."

For Oregon fans, McGrath is the one high school phenom to watch. Next season, he is set to begin his collegiate career in Eugene, running at Hayward Field for head coach Martin Smith.

At Lincoln this year, McGrath has set the Oregon state record in the 800 meters and is expected to make his mark in the 1,500 meters and mile.

At the Prefontaine Classic, he finished 15th with a time of 4:10.66.

"I just had a bad race," he said, adding that running in another race just days before may have hurt him. "I'm just disappointed."

Saturday's race was not the first time McGrath had been lucky enough to run at Hayward. Just weeks before, he took sec-

ond in the Bill McChesney Jr. Memorial Twilight Mile with a time of 4:05.28.

"It's a wonderful experience," he said of his races at Hayward Field. "The crowd is behind you. You feel bad when you don't run well here because they all show you so much support. So hopefully next time I'll run well for them."

With the Ducks, McGrath will join a talented group of runners next season that includes Noel Paulson and Eric Logsdon in the 1,500 meters, and Ryan Flaherty in the 800 meters.

"I'm still looking forward to Oregon," he said, still undecided on what he will study. "It's tiring to even think about running again, but that's the way I am after races."

Magness, who finished 14th Saturday, is set to attend Rice next season. At Klein Oak, he has become one of the top high school track and field athletes in the nation.

His time of 4:01.02 didn't quite come
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