

■ In my opinion



JON ROETMAN
ROUGHING THE PASSER

Three days of baseball, beer and bickering

LOS ANGELES — A drunken brawl, constant bickering and the rancid smell of vomit-stained carpeting.

Sound like substandard living?

Try three fun nights in southern California.

For the second straight year, my buddy Brandon and I drove to Los Angeles to watch my Chicago Cubs take on his Dodgers. It was a time for bonding, story telling and ample calorie ingestion.

Last year's test run was fun, but it didn't last long enough. We caught the final two games of a three-game series, but it seemed like we had to leave as soon as we got here. This year, we got tickets to all three games and gave ourselves plenty of free time with a four-night Ramada Inn reservation.

We left Eugene around 11 a.m. Sunday, and after far too many stops, got to Los Angeles around 1:30 a.m. Monday. As if that long of a drive isn't brutal enough, I spent the entire trip struggling to come to terms with the fact that my hair is starting to thin out.

Hey, nothing makes a 14-hour drive fly by like mental anguish and self-loathing.

We awoke Monday and tried to get a little sun. We went out to the hotel's swimming pool and started doing cannonballs with a group of youngsters and a fat old man.

Swimming around, I wasn't giving much thought to my physical appearance. I liken my upper body to that of a construction worker, since my workouts for the past few months were 95 percent weight lifting and five percent (if I'm lucky) cardiovascular work. Add a pair of tattoos and a giant cigar burn to my broad shoulders and gut and I figured the comparison was fairly accurate.

I was informed otherwise when the old man approached Brandon — whose body is fairly similar — and asked, "Who y'all drive for?"

Being mistaken for a truck driver. Now there's a confidence builder.

From the pool, it was off to the game. After briefly getting lost on Cesar Chavez Avenue, we found our way into Dodger Stadium and immediately loaded up on Super Dodger Dogs and carbonated beverages.

Our Memorial Day seats were near the left-field foul pole and protected from the sun, which was nice after last year's brutal sunburn.

After a few moments of soaking up the atmosphere, it was time to get serious. Brandon's Dodgers took two out of three from my Cubs during last year's Los Angeles escapade — the teams split the games we attended — and I was out for revenge.

It didn't take long for the Cubs to set the tone as second baseman Jerry Hairston Jr. hit the second pitch of the game into the left-field seats for a home run. This immediately put a disinterested look on Brandon's face and started the kind of bickering that can only occur between two uber-competitive friends.

Things got no better for the Dodgers as the Cubs also got homers from Michael Ramirez Barrett and third baseman Aramis Ramirez and won 5-3 behind a quality pitching

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Top athletes gather for Pre Classic

Tommy Skipper will be Oregon's sole competitor at this weekend's annual, Olympian-packed meet

BY STEPHEN MILLER
SPORTS REPORTER

An astounding number of Olympic and World Championship medals have been won by athletes who will compete at this year's Prefontaine Classic. It's easily more than a track fan can count on his or her fingers and toes.

The total sits at 105, and the field for the men's 100-meter dash still needs to be announced for Saturday's meet at Hayward Field. As the list of competitors stands, eight athletes won gold medals at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, and eight others won a silver or bronze medal.

"Tom (Jordan) is adamant about putting on the best track meet in the world," Oregon throws coach Lance Deal said about the event coordinator of the honorary meet for Steve Prefontaine. "The Pre Classic is a track meet that people go to as a source of entertainment. It's exciting; there's always great performances and world-class athletes."

The Pre Classic will feature 12 running events and four field events; however, no throwing events will be included in this year's meet.

"It's not a full meet, which sticks in my craw a little bit," Deal said.

Still, Deal said the meet is fast-paced and always attracts a large collection of world-class athletes. This year is no different.

On the men's side, Oregon pole vaulter Tommy Skipper is scheduled to make his second appearance in the Pre Classic. He finished eighth in 2004 with an 18 foot, 4 1/2 inch clearance. Skipper, who did not place at the Pacific-10 Conference Championships or the NCAA West Regional, will be Oregon's only athlete competing Saturday. Within that field are Olympians Tim Mack and Toby Stevenson, who respectively claimed the gold and silver medals in Athens. Seven of the 10 competitors have cleared the coveted six-meter mark (19-8 1/4).

Oregon athletes not competing this weekend are even excited

about the Pre Classic.

"It'll be cool that it's this weekend before Nationals," said Oregon senior Kayla Mel-lott, who advanced to the NCAA Championships in the 400-meter hurdles. "It gets you excited and makes you want to get out there. I've been looking forward to it all year."

China's Liu Xiang headlines the 110 hurdles race. The 2004 Olympic gold medalist and co-world record holder is slated to make his first appearance on U.S. soil this weekend. Russian gold medalist Yuri Borzakovski will also be making his first U.S. appearance in the 800.

Jamaica's Danny McFarlane, an Olympic silver medalist, will compete for the 400-meter hurdles crown.

LaShawn Merritt, who is only 18 years old, has the second-fastest time worldwide this year in the 400 (44.66) and will face fellow Americans and former Olympic medalists Andrew Rock and Derrick Brew.

Bernard Lagat, former runner for Kenya who is now a U.S. citizen, has a chance to break the record in the Bowerman Mile held by Hicham El Guerrouj (3:49.92). Lagat's best time this season is 3:49.89. He

has the fastest time by an American in the 1,500 as well, at 3:34.34.

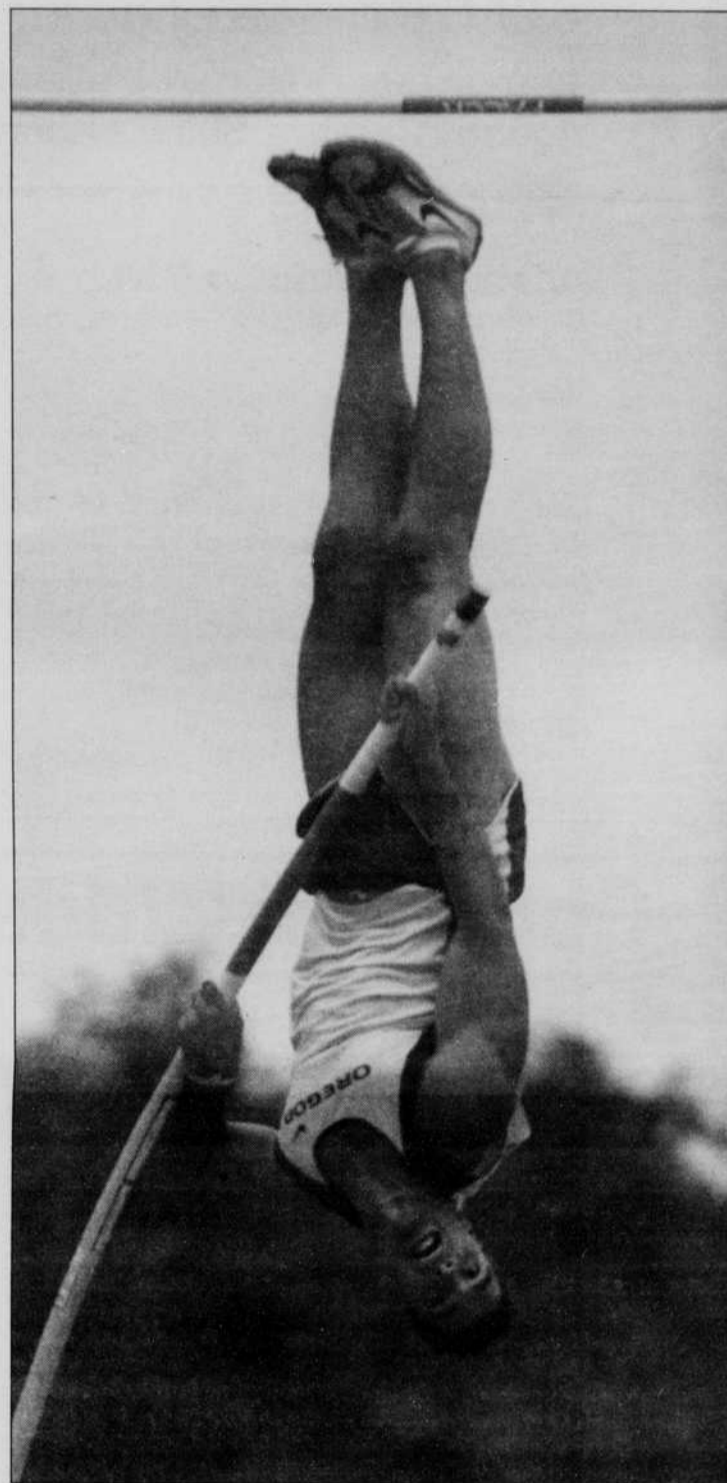
The two-mile race will be held this weekend for the first time since 1995. It will be a battle of young guns as 20-year-olds Eliud Kipchoge of Kenya and Mulgeta Wendimu of Ethiopia are expected to lead the pack. Two Americans, Alan Webb and Dathan Ritzenhein, have a chance to set a new U.S. record in the event.

On the women's side, Mozambique's Maria Mutola returns in search of her 13th consecutive win at the Pre Classic in the 800. At age 18, Mutola lost her first race at Hayward Field but hasn't lost since. The 2000 Olympic champion took fourth place in Athens.

The 100 and 400 races will feature two showdowns between gold and silver medalists.

"The Pre Classic is a track meet that people go to as a source of entertainment. It's exciting; there's always great performances and world-class athletes."

LANCE DEAL | Oregon throws coach



ZANE RITT | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon sophomore Tommy Skipper vaults himself toward the bar at last week's NCAA West Regional Championships in Eugene. Skipper is the only Duck who will compete against some of the nation's top athletes at the Prefontaine Classic on Saturday.

In the 100, Belarus' gold medalist Yuliya Nesterenko will fight to the finish line once more with American Lauryn Williams. In the 400, gold medalist Tonique Williams-Darling of the Bahamas will have to shake off Mexican silver medalist Ana Guevara.

In the 100 hurdles, Olympic record holder Joanna Hayes of the United States (12.37) faces off against 2003 World champion Perdita Felicien of Canada. Pre Classic record holder Brigitte Foster of Jamaica (12.45) and bronze medalist Melissa Morrison are also

in the running.

Great Britain's Paula Radcliffe, silver medalist Tatyana Tomashova of Russia, and Shayne Culpepper, the top American distance runner who won the 3,000 at Oregon Twilight, will run a showdown in the 1,500.

On the field, gold medalist Yelena Slesarenko of Russia will highlight the high jump, while her Russian teammate and bronze medalist Tatyana Kotova will compete in the long jump.

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IN BRIEF

LaVoie shoots 2nd-consecutive 2-over par 72 at NCAAs

For the second straight day, Oregon's Gregg LaVoie shot a 2-over par 72 and sits tied for 37th after the second round Thursday at the 108th NCAA Division I Men's Golf Championship at the par-70, 7,131-yard Caves Valley Golf Course in Owings Mills, Md.

The senior started consistent on the front nine, bogeying the fifth and ninth holes and

recovering for a birdie on the seventh hole for a 1-over 36.

LaVoie hiccupped on the 12th hole with a bogey but bounced right back on the 13th and birdied to stay at 1-over par. He made par on the next two holes but ran into trouble on the 16th where he double-bogeyed and dropped to 3-over par for the round.

He recovered once again on the next hole with a birdie and parred the 18th to give him a 2-over 72.

Atop the leaderboard is Michael Putnam of Pepperdine, who shot his second consecutive 67 Thursday and leads his first-round leader Major Manning by one stroke at 6-under par.

In the team competition, Georgia is 2-under par and leads Tennessee by a whopping nine strokes. Southern California sits in fourth place at 12-over par and Washington is tied for fifth at 14-over par.

— Clayton Jones