

100-meter dash is popular draw at Pre Classic

The quick-paced event features some of the fastest athletes around the world

BY BRIAN SMITH
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It's not a secret that in track, Eugene is defined by the distance program and runners that have been a part of the illustrious history of Hayward Field.

But at the Nike Prefontaine Classic on Saturday, 2004 gold medalist Justin Gatlin and a loaded field — including the world-record holder Tim Montgomery — showed why the 100-meter dash is just as exciting, if not more so, than any distance event.

In addition to Gatlin, Saturday's heat list included the fourth-place finisher in Athens and gold medalist in the 200, Shawn Crawford, and the 2003 World Champion Kim Collins.

With the assistance of the wind, four of the eight entrants in the men's 100-meters recorded times of under 10 seconds, one of the critical ingredients in the event's popularity.

"I don't know, maybe because it's so fast," Jamaica's Asafa Powell said. "People are always cheering the most (during the 100) because guys are running some unbelievable times."

Gatlin and Powell both recorded a time of 9.84, while Americans Leonard Scott and Crawford recorded 9.94 and 9.98 seconds, respectively.

Being able to run times below 10 seconds is certainly a measuring stick when it comes to comparing the best sprinters in the world, and the athletes that are able to break that mark are most certainly the most well known.

Names like Maurice Greene, Carl Lewis and Montgomery, who ran a 9.78 in Paris in 2002 not only excite the crowd, but the competitors as well.

"This was my first time running with Montgomery," Powell said. "It was a pleasure running with him, and I always love running with Gatlin



Sprinters Asafa Powell, left, and Justin Gatlin cross the finish line during Saturday's Prefontaine Classic. Gatlin won the event with a time of 9.84.

NICOLE BARKER | PHOTOGRAPHER

and Crawford and all the guys."

The field on the women's side included a match-up of the No. 1 and No. 2-ranked runners coming into Saturday. In the end, the No. 3 ranked runner, American Lauryn Williams took home the crown before explaining the allure of the 100.

"Because it gives you the title of fastest person in the world if you are

the best at it," Williams said. "With a two mile, you're still the fastest in the world at your event, but I equate it to racing cars and really fast things."

Both events drew large ovations from the crowd of 12,885.

"We're trying to show everybody, especially in Oregon where there is a lot of history in the distance, you know with Prefontaine heading it," Gatlin said. "Coming here I

wanted to show that sprints are great too, and that we could put on a good show."

On Saturday, Gatlin and company produced. Current No. 1 Powell, who had run a 9.84 earlier this year in Jamaica, Montgomery and Gatlin brought the West Grandstand crowd to its feet as they flew down the track.

"I don't think it's the best event

on the track," Gatlin said. "I think it's the most exciting; it's fast, you have to keep your eye on it. It can be a head-to-head race all the way to the end."

Or maybe the allure is because unlike a distance event, if you blink, you could miss the entire 100 meters.

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Jones: Sports staffers, thanks for your hard work and play

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sports journalists.

As student journalists, we are often viewed differently in the eyes of other journalists as "newbies" or "clueless" when it comes to professionalism and ethics in journalism. I know this year, with the amount of dedication and traveling this sports desk has done, we took a big step forward in gaining respect.

This summer will truly be my "Seventh-Inning Stretch," as I get a break before coming back to pilot the sports section one last term before I graduate.

Unfortunately, I'll be losing all three of my staffers — Dome and Roetman to graduation and Miller to the advertising department.

So in parting ways with these gentleman (a term I use loosely), I want to say thank you for all the dedication you have brought to this section.

Miller, I hope advertising realizes how lucky it is to get such a hard worker whom I never had to discipline.

Dome, your great columns and your "special" personality will be missed around the desk.

Roetman, I can't say how bright a future you have in this business as long as you stay away from fast women and the poker table. Seriously, you've taught me a lot about sports journalism, and I've gained a true friend in the process.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who've taken the time to read my columns, whether it be in class, at lunch or on the john. I appreciate the feedback you give.

I'll see you all in the bottom half of the inning this fall.

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Pre Classic: Event features world-class athletes

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who had owned the Hayward Field and Prefontaine Classic records since 1995, set the previous record for this uncommon event at 8:11.59 in 1999.

Alan Webb passed Kenyan Boaz Cheboiwo on the final stretch to finish second at 8:11.48. At the same time, he became the fastest American two-mile runner.

"I was trying my best to stick with Kipchoge in that front pack, but we went out so fast and it started hurting a little bit toward the end," Webb said. "Any time I run here at Hayward Field, I feel like I always manage to do something special."

Co-world record holder and 2004 Olympic champion in the 110 high hurdles Liu Xiang of China lived up to his reputation by rewriting the Hayward Field and Prefontaine Classic records in 13.06 — the fastest time in the world this year.

American Terrence Trammell finished second (13.12) in a replication of the first and second-place finishes at Athens last summer. Former Olympic champion hurdler Allen Johnson was disqualified after committing the field's second false start.

The wind helped push American Justin Gatlin and Jamaican Asafa Powell to equal times of 9.84 in the 100, tying Powell's season and personal best. "I saw I was there with him, and we were going neck and neck at it," said Gatlin, who finished eighth, "and I knew that I had a little more in the tank, so I just pushed it at the end."

"Last year, I did really bad here, so I knew I had to make it up this year," Gatlin said. "I knew that I had to step up; it's my responsibility as an Olympic champion to go out there and show everybody that I'm the greatest."

Bershawn Jackson set a new Prefontaine Classic record in the 400 hurdles with a 47.91. Jackson,

who owns the best time in the world this year, edged out James Carter (47.95) as they recorded the second and third-fastest times this year.

In the field, American Erin Aldrich cleared 6 feet, four and 3/4 inches for a victory in the high jump, which is minimum qualifying height for the 2005 World Championships.

"It's just a huge weight off my shoulders to get that standard," Aldrich said. "Now I don't have to worry about it as much."

Leevan Sands of the Bahamas used a mark of 56-3 3/4 in the triple jump to set a new Prefontaine Classic meet record and stay a half inch ahead of China's Yanxi Lii.

At the pole vault runway, Americans Brad Walker and Toby Stevenson could get no higher than 19-4 1/4. Walker won because he cleared 19-0 1/4 meters on his first attempt.

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