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MEMORIES OF HAYWARD FIELD | PART 3

A little 'Pre' history at Hayward Field

By **NEIL BRANSON**
For The Daily Astorian

The precursor to the Prefontaine Classic was the 1973 "Hayward Field Restoration Meet," staged to raise money to replace the old west grandstands.

In 1975, a name change was made to the Bowerman Classic to honor the university's legendary coach.

I was also in my second year of teaching and coaching at Mohawk High School, north of Springfield, in 1975.

It was late May and our track season was over, so with an open evening I went to the Twilight Meet at Hayward Field and watched Steve Prefontaine win the 5,000 meters. It was his last race.

Turning on my radio the next morning, I heard "and Steve Prefontaine will be greatly missed." What? Where is he going?

Shortly after that the report confirmed that Pre was killed in a single-car accident. There was a palpable pall hanging over Eugene and the surrounding area. I did not go to the candlelight vigil at Hay-

ward that night, or the other services.

Instead, after having not run for a couple of years, I laced up my old running shoes and went out for an easy run, to ease my mind.

Hayward Field came alive again with track and field. It could not quit. Pre never quit. Six days after Pre's death the Bowerman Classic was changed to the Prefontaine Classic.

It became a stop on the IAAF Grand Prix of international track and field tour and is now one of the 14 Diamond League events that are staged on five continents.

The Pre Classic brings in the heavy hitters. Nowhere in Oregon, if not the United States, is there a collection of such world talent in any sport.

Listening to the introduction of competitors for each event is to hear a who's who of that particular discipline. An example was this year's 400 meters.

It featured Rio gold medalist Shaunae Miller-Uibo and current World champion Phyllis Francis, lining up with gold and silver medalists from



Oregon senior Laura Bobek, an Astoria High School graduate, prepares to let loose another throw in the discus finals at Hayward Field in 2014.

the world indoor championships, Courtney Okolo and Shakima Wimbley, respectively, plus the 2014 World outdoor champion Stephanie Ann McPherson.

Among entries for most all events are those holding world-leading marks and

national record-setters.

The Pre Classic is the center of the world for the best of milers. This year the International mile kicked off the Pre Classic's doubleheader of miling, providing the meet's 400th sub-4 (winner Luke Mathews) and the stadium's

500th (sixth-placer Riley Masters) as 12 runners broke four minutes.

American record holder Alan Webb was on hand to present both with plaques honoring the milestones. Timothy Cheruiyot raced away to win the Bowerman Mile to give the meet and stadium its 24th sub-3:50 performance at 3:49.87. In fourth, Jakob Ingebrigtsen ran a four-second PR 3:52.28 to become the fastest-ever 17-year-old.

Sixteen times the NCAA Championships have been at Hayward Field. In that span, the Oregon men have won five times and the women twice. In 2015 both the women and men won on their home turf.

In 2014, the Oregon women were in a quest for their first outdoor championship since 1985. The first day of competition was shaky at best and coach Robert Johnson let the team know it was time to suck it up.

The next day, Astoria High School graduate Laura Bobek, in her final meet for the Ducks, produced a herculean effort, adding 12 feet to her personal best to throw the discus 184-

feet, 8 inches, and topping the University of Oregon school record set in 1985.

That effort and the six points she earned was a spark that ignited the women's team that had been underperforming.

Last year for the Oregon women, it was win the 1,600-meter relay or hand the team title to Georgia. With the crowd behind them, the ladies were in a dogfight with USC from gun to wire. In a break-neck finish, the Ducks edged the women of Troy 3:23.13 to 3:23.36. A scant 0.23 seconds earned the Ducks the title.

With the restoration of Hayward Field, the NCAAs are moving to Austin, Texas for at least the next two years. The where and when of the Pre Classic is yet to be decided. A decent venue for the Pre will draw the athletes and the fans because of the synergy that comes from both groups' enthusiasm for the sport. My suggestion — attend the meet and start your own list of memories.

Neil Branson is a longtime cross-country and track coach at Seaside High School.

Mariners place ace Paxton on DL with forearm bruise

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Seattle Mariners have placed ace James Paxton on the disabled list with a forearm bruise, one day after the left-hander was struck by a line drive.

Paxton was facing the third batter in the first inning Tuesday night when Jed Lowrie lined a ball back up the middle, hitting the pitcher hard. Paxton walked toward second base in obvious pain as a team trainer and manager Scott Servais rushed onto the field.

Paxton was replaced by Felix Hernandez.

After the game, Paxton told reporters he felt tightness in his arm and could not



AP Photo/Ben Margot

Seattle Mariners pitcher James Paxton has been placed on the disabled list after being hit by a line drive.

grip a baseball. X-rays were negative.

Paxton is 10-5, including a no-hitter against Toronto, and a 3.68 ERA. Hernandez, who allowed two runs over 5 2/3

innings, is likely to take Paxton's turn in the rotation.

Right-hander Christian Bergman was recalled from Triple-A Tacoma to fill Paxton's roster spot.

Gordon breaks scoreless tie with HR in 12th, M's top A's

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Dee Gordon doesn't have many home runs this season. Two to be exact. So when Seattle's light-hitting utility player muscled up in the 12th inning, he celebrated by kissing both biceps as he stood in the dugout after crossing home plate.

It was a good-natured gesture toward a few of Gordon's teammates who were ribbing him as he rounded the bases. It was also an expression of relief

for the Mariners, who lost the first two games of this series after sweeping first-place Houston on the road.

Gordon homered off Yusmeiro Petit to break a scoreless tie, and the Mariners beat the Oakland Athletics 2-0 on Wednesday to avoid a three-game sweep.

"I got lucky," Gordon said. "It's evening out. I've been lining out so much the last month."

Jean Segura had four hits to help the Mariners close within 2½ games of the A's for the sec-

ond AL wild-card spot.

"We needed to get this ballgame today," Seattle manager Scott Servais said. "It's not going to get any easier, but we're starting to play with our confidence again and have some swag to our team."

Seattle's Mike Leake pitched eight innings of two-hit ball with six strikeouts and one walk. Oakland's Brett Anderson went 7 2/3 innings without allowing a run in his longest outing since June 16, 2015.

Kamara leads way for playoff hopes

Associated Press

Kei Kamara seems to have found a home.

The 33-year-old striker is in his first season with the Vancouver Whitecaps, his third Major League Soccer team since 2015. He's settled in as the team's leading scorer with nine goals, while also becoming a leader to the young squad that includes 17-year-old emerging star Alphonso Davies.

The Whitecaps currently sit in seventh place in the Western Conference standings, just outside the playoff picture. But they're coming off a hard-fought draw against NYCFC at Yankee Stadium and a road win over the Timbers last weekend that snapped Portland's 15-match undefeated streak.

Seahawks running back Penny has surgery on broken finger

Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — Seattle Seahawks first-round pick Rashaad Penny had surgery Wednesday to repair a broken finger.

Head coach Pete Carroll said the surgery went well and Penny isn't expected to miss more than a couple of weeks.

"He can already move it and it's not going to be in a cast or any of that kind of stuff, so he's in pretty good shape," Carroll said. "We got a great report on it. He's not going to be out very long at all."

The rookie running back out of San Diego State was injured during pass-blocking drills Monday and left the field with trainers.

Carroll said he believes Penny can still be ready for

the start of the regular season.

"I don't have any doubt about what he's capable of doing. I really don't," Carroll said. "We just got to make sure he's in great shape and let him play ball."

Penny carried eight times for 16 yards in his preseason debut Thursday against the Indianapolis Colts. He also caught two passes for seven yards. He has been the second backup in the team's rotation behind Chris Carson, who had gained the starting job last year after being a seventh-round selection out of Oklahoma State.

"It was tough," Carson said of Penny's injury. "You could tell by the look on his face that he was hurt about it. But he's a tough kid. He'll bounce back."

NASCAR driver Kahne retiring

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.C. — NASCAR driver Kasey Kahne says he is retiring from full-time racing. The 38-year-old Kahne announced his intentions Thursday on Twitter, saying "I'm not sure what the future holds for me, but I'm at ease with the decision

that I have made."

The former Hendrick Motorsports driver has 18 victories in 15 years in the Cup Series, including a play-off-clinching one last season at famed Indianapolis Motor Speedway. That win came amid speculation that Hendrick would part ways with Kahne following six seasons.

Hendrick made it official two weeks later.

Kahne signed on with Leavine Family Racing for 2018. He has one top-five finish in 23 starts for Leavine. He had been offered a ride with Leavine next year, but plans to spend his time with his young son, Tanner, and with his sprint car team.



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