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In Retrospect



A touch of class

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"THERE IS NOBODY," said Scott Daggatt, "who can train with us."

There are few people who can keep up with Scott Daggatt and Paul Geis at anything they do. Especially if it involves running or talking.

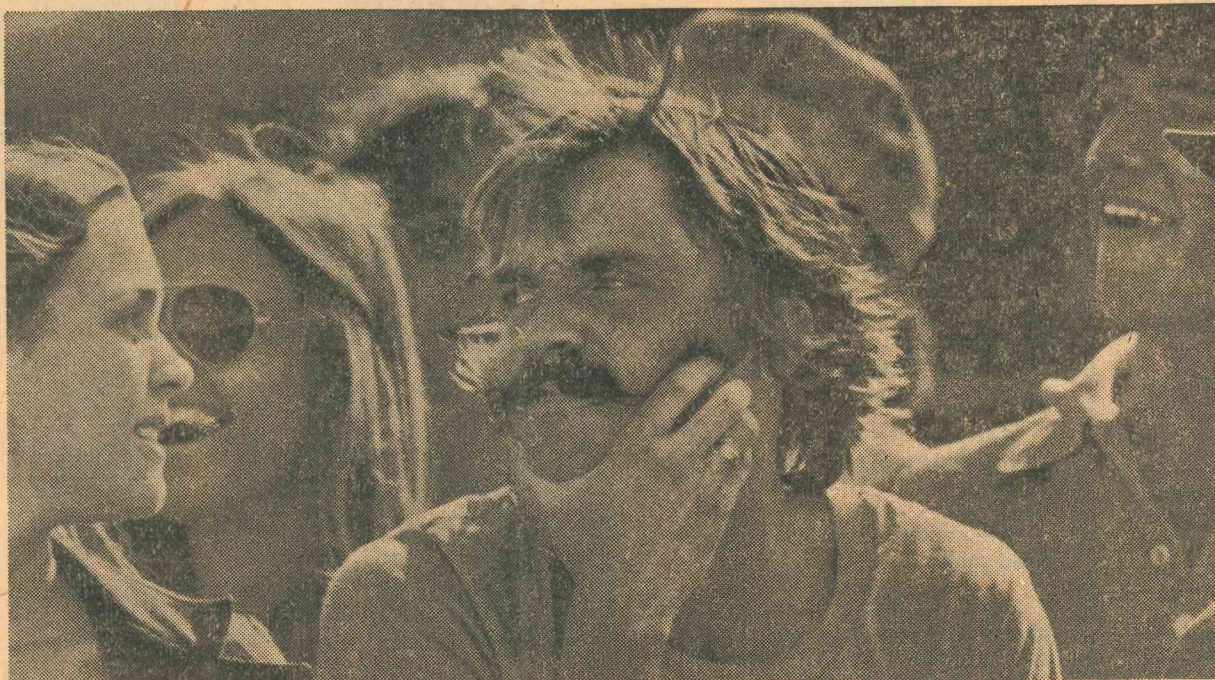
"My biggest problem has been my head," said Daggatt in the pleasant aftermath of his 4:01.3 victory over UCLA in the mile Saturday. "I get too nervous; I've been known to lose my cool."

His roommate in 736 College Inn is none other than Geis, the awesomely gifted distance runner who re-entered the Oregon track scene Saturday with a three-mile that left you amazed at how really good Geis is and, at the same time, sorry for teammate Terry Williams.

Geis and Daggatt aren't your typical holler guys, unless it is hollering at the Beavers, which they've been known to do.

"I like to see the team do well," said Daggatt, "but I think if you have a PR (personal record) and in so doing win your race, then you'll be helping the team." In his own way, Daggatt was a big plus for the Ducks.

Oregon Coach Bill Dellinger has made a big thing this spring out of his Ducks competing for Oregon, not just themselves. Dellinger says he is more interested in team points, than in PRs.



Although those around him are delighted at Geis' win, Prefontaine appears to have other thoughts

(Register-Guard photo by Brian Lanker)

After his 13:23.8 three-mile victory over UCLA in his first competition of the year, Geis was somewhat surprised at his own fitness, somewhat apologetic about his race tactics, and somewhat disturbed that he had to run at all.

GEIS AND DELLINGER have not been on the best terms this spring. For openers, Geis is not overly excited about all this one-for-all, all-for-one talk.

There were many people upset at his failure to help a teammate — Terry Williams — bear the brunt of the pace and the brisk wind during the three mile.

Basically, Geis let Williams lead all the way. With a lap to go, Geis put on a slightly garrish sprint down the straightaway in front of the East Grandstand, crushing Williams in the process.

"I suppose I owe people an explanation of why I wouldn't lead," said Geis, before anyone had a chance to ask him why he hadn't led.

"I've always run to win," he said, "and I didn't see any reason to be inconsistent this time, especially when this was my first race and I didn't even know if I was fit enough to finish."

Dellinger was asked about Geis' tactics, and at first

said he would rather not comment on the race. Later, however, the coach said it best.

"I would rather see more team unity in that type of a race," he said, "but how can you be critical of a guy who wants to be that competitive."

PAUL GEIS, AND Steve Prefontaine before him, represent the best and the worst of the sport we claim to capital. On one hand, you love the free, fresh spirit of the track and field athlete.

You know he has put hours of thought and reflection into his sometimes lonely endeavor. And, uninhibited by the dictatorship of a football and basketball program, that he will say his piece.

Most every spring Saturday for the last five years, you knew you could go to Hayward Field and watch Pre and Paul set records, and later set you on your ear with their philosophies.

There is no doubt that some would prefer that Pre run for North Vietnam in the next Olympics after his talk of being an international, not an American, athlete.

There are others who will always root for Terry Williams to beat Paul Geis, remembering the day that Paul used Terry as a windshield.

Geis can be criticized for thinking of himself, not his team, and yet it is Geis who stopped Arizona State in the mile a year ago. Geis, like Pre, is a fierce competitor who will find a way to win, if there is a way to be found.

Track and field is both an individual and a team sport, and the mixing of egos and talents is a difficult one. Especially when you deal with distance runners, who have a rather snowy reputation.

Remove the flakes, however, and the American records are gone. Despite Pre's pronouncements and Geis' spirit — remember that he charged OSU coach Berny Wagner last year — they've been the basis of every good meet held here in the 1970s.

They have spoiled us with world-class performances. What we need now is some world-class class. Or is that too much to ask?