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Pre runs an 'irrelevant' 8:36.4

MODESTO, Calif. — Steve Prefontaine eschewed thoughts of a world record in the two-mile here Saturday night, instead settling for a more mundane 8:36.4 clocking, easily good enough to win him the event in the annual California Relays.

In the 100, Houston McTear, the prep sensation from Milligan, Fla., ran 9.4 and lost out to Reggie Jones, the NCAA champion from Tennessee, who ran 9.3. McTear called it "the sorriest race I ever ran."

In the mile, Wilson Waigwa of Texas-El Paso via Kenya ran 3:55.6 in a race flavored strongly with Oregon runners. Carlos Martinez of Mexico clocked 3:58.4 for second, while Scott Daggatt of Oregon did 3:58.8 — 10 seconds faster than his Pac-8 winning time in Pullman last week — and Matt Centrowitz, a redshirt who will become eligible next year — clocked a personal record 3:39.2 for fourth.

Later, Prefontaine revealed that he had junked his announced plan to go for a world record even before the race began.

"It was my decision before the race," he explained. "I wasn't going for any record.

The first quarter (61 seconds) was too fast, and I just ran to win from there on. The time was irrelevant."

One obvious reason was that Prefontaine wasn't running against the kind of people conducive to catching the 8:13.9 world record of Brendan Foster of England.

At the start of the race, Leonard Hilton took off fast and had a 15-yard lead after two laps. Meanwhile, Pre went through the brisk 61 for openers, then turned succeeding times of 2:06, 3:09 and 4:13.

By the time he was within 120 yards of completing five laps, Pre was ahead for good. Hilton finished fifth, and the closest to Pre was John Halberstadt with an 8:52.0 time.

"The last three laps I kind of coasted," Pre said. "Not many records are broken when there's not anybody to lead you. I don't know what Hilton was doing."

Prefontaine's post-mile lap times were 5:17, 6:23 and 7:31.

Daggatt, meanwhile, is priming for the NCAA meet in two weeks at Provo, Utah.

"I overworked the early part of this week and I didn't fully recover," he said, though his time didn't require an apology.

"I think I could have gone faster and taken second, but I couldn't have beaten Waigwa." Waigwa's last lap was a speedy 55.8.

Centrowitz, the transfer from Manhattan, had a previous best of 4:02.7.

"I ran pretty evenly all the way, running 30-second 220s until the last one when I was a little under," Centrowitz said. "My goal in this race was to break 4:02.7 and to qualify for the AAU (which he did; the standard is 4:02.0).

The discus was won by Pentti Kahma, one of the delegation from Finland who will compete Thursday night in the NCAA Preparation Meet at Eugene. He threw 219-3 to hand John Powell of Pacific Coast Club his first loss in five meets. Powell threw 216-11, while ex-Oregon competitor Mac Wilkins did 208-11 and announced some dissatisfaction with it.

Wilkins' series was 194-10, foul, 208-11, 206-4, 203-4, 203-4.

McTear, who ran 9.0 to tie the world 100 record two weeks ago, got what appeared to be a strong start, but later said he stumbled coming off the blocks. Jones burst past McTear some 15 yards from the tape. McTear barely beat out Don Quarrie of Jamaica for the second spot.

Steve Williams, who was supposed to run against McTear, scratched, disappointing the crowd of 8,000.

High jumper Dwight Stones cleared 7-5, the best performance this year in the event, but failed in three attempts to break his own world record.

The 21-year-old Long Beach State athlete had the bar raised to 7-7, a half-inch over the record set in 1973 at Munich, but knocked the bar down with his back on all three attempts.

Joni Huntley, an Oregon State student, set a meet record by winning the women's high jump with a 6-1 effort, and Cindy Poor of San Jose lowered the women's 880 record to 2:06.9.