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Pre's talking records after 3:55.0 mile

By **BLAINE NEWNHAM**
Register-Guard Sports Editor

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With darkness and the temperature falling Friday night on chattering Hayward Field, Steve Prefontaine fought through cold and fatigue to become the ninth fastest miler in world history with a Twilight, University of Oregon and Pac-8 mile record of 3:55.0.

His time was easily the fastest in the world this year and only Jim Ryun (3:51.1) and Marty Liquori (3:54.6) have ever run faster as Americans.

IN HIS WAKE stood the impressive shadow of Knut Kvalheim, the massive Norwegian who also dipped under the magic barrier of four minutes with a second-place time of 3:58.2.

A heart-broken third was sophomore Mark Feig, just missing at 4:00.4. The meet's rabbit, Scott Daggatt, was fourth in 4:01.0, and freshman Gary Barger cut six seconds from his personal best in finishing fifth in 4:05.2.

In all, seven Ducks were under 4:07. Having five men under 4:06 is especially interesting when the rest of the Pac-8 has had just three runners able to do that all season.

"I'd have to say the world record (Ryun's epic 3:51.1) is within my grasp," said Pre, and there were few here who questioned that.

"The conditions weren't that good,

were they," asked UO Coach Bill Dellinger, knowing full well the answer.

"Really, it was a pretty amazing mile. Under ideal conditions, Pre could have run 3:52, I think."

FOR THE RECORD, the temperature was 46 degrees and the wind was ripping through you at 12 miles per hour.

Which, down the backstretch, put the chill factor at 34 degrees.

All week Pre had talked about being down for this one, still not fully recovered from his historic mile-three mile double of two weeks before.

"Twice during the meet," said Dellinger, "Pre came up and told me he didn't want to run because his legs were dead."

If he hadn't, 6,500 fans would have wondered why they'd spent \$3 to catch a cold. Until the mile, the meet was a green and yellow turkey.

But, then, the Twilight Mile is the Twilight Meet and the frozen wait was worth it.

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BUT THE RECORD pace had been set and Pre wasn't one to let a situation like that get away.

Todd Lathers was programmed to take the second 60-second lap, but when he lagged Pre immediately stepped up to take the lead and Kvalheim was right there to follow. They hit the 880 in 1:58.0 and the crowd was on its feet.

It was shortly a two-man race and Kvalheim stayed with Pre until they reached the three-quarter mark in 2:58, and Pre took off.

"I could feel Knut breathing down my back all the way," continued Pre. "It was so good to have him up there. When I moved it felt so good to know I was able to finish strong under those conditions. That was one record I really wanted."

What he got was three records, breaking Dave Wilborn's Pac-8 and school mark of 3:56.2, and Divine's Twilight record of 3:56.3.

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12:40's," he said. "Ah, you never know for sure."

The world three-mile record is 12:50.4 by Ron Clarke.

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It was Kvalheim who in the 1971 Pac-8 meet scored in the mile, three-mile and steeplechase.

Two weeks ago, however, he ran seventh and last in the 880 with a time of 1:54.5.

Last Saturday he stayed home when the team went to Washington State, but it was that day that he ran a hard workout with Pre, and kept up.

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DELLINGER HAS commented all season that a healthy Kvalheim would be one of America's very best collegiate milers. His 3:58.2, in fact, is bettered only in the U.S. this year by Pre, and is better than the 3:58.5 by Leonard Hilton in winning the Kansas Relays.

Most dismayed by the evening was Feig, the sophomore from South Eugene.

"It just makes you mad that you come that close," he said, "but I know I can do it now. I missed it off the top of the turn when I jumped around Daggatt instead of moving around him slowly . . . and the third lap was probably 63 or so."

Daggatt, too, was close enough to the barrier to be frustrated.

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"I did my job, and it helped Pre. But it didn't do much for me. I'll never again be a rabbit. This race will make me tougher," he concluded.

THERE WERE A few good marks among the other 14 events, but generally the meet lacked the warmth and competition to approach Twilight Meets of the past.

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(Register-Guard photos by Wayne Eastburn)

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PRE PROJECTED that he is now the best, or one of the best, runners in world history at a mile, three miles and six miles. His times of 3:55.0, 12:58.6 and 27:09.3 give credence, although only research and the Portuguese scoring tables will tell for sure.

Two of those three marks have been run in the last five weeks. In the weeks to come he may take a serious shot at the three-mile record.

"Later this spring I might run in the

12:40's," he said. "Ah, you never know for sure."

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Tom Hale, an ineligible transfer from Whitworth College, won the six-mile in 27:57.6, thus becoming only the second runner in Oregon history to break 28 minutes for the distance.

Bob Grubbs set an Oregon frosh record of 28:24.2 in placing third.