

Track and Field



Don Paige



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"The Best I Can Be"

Such is the competitive pride which burns within Don Paige that being the very best still wouldn't be good enough. He'll be satisfied only when he's as good as he possibly can be. "That is the ultimate, to become the best I can," Paige said. "I want to achieve my highest potential... If I become the best in the United States, if I become the best in the world, that's just part of it. The most important concern is fulfilling potential. I won't be satisfied until I accomplish all that I can."

For a while, it appeared that Paige wouldn't get the full opportunity to realize that potential. In 1976, during his freshman year at Villanova, he suffered a stress fracture of the fibula in his left leg, putting an end to his season, and the following year he was disabled once again by a recurrence of the injury. Paige was so distraught that he wouldn't even mingle with his teammates while he was recuperating, feeling he didn't belong, but his unshakable determination had carried him back to a point where he could have had a good chance to earn a medal in the 1980 Olympics.

The possessor of a tremendous closing kick, the slight New York State native went unbeaten through the 1977-78

season, and followed it by winning the NCAA indoor 1,000-yard championship. Outdoors, he ran a career best 3:38.8 in the NCAA 1,500-meters and a personal record of 3:58.1 in the mile. Then, in 1979, Paige set a pair of world indoor records three weeks apart on the same track in New York, clocking 2:20.3 for the 1,000-meter run and then 2:05.3 for 1,000 yards.

"I've matured more and I've gotten stronger as I get older," Paige said. As the Olympics drew closer, Paige tried to settle on a distance that would be most suitable for him, and Villanova coach Jumbo Jim Elliott decided to test him at the mile. His first big race at this classic distance came in the "Dream Mile" in Philadelphia, and Paige responded by beating out a strong international field. "I just wanted to see what I could do and I'm very pleased," said Paige, who is expected to race at 1,500 meters in the Olympics.

DON PAIGE

Born Oct. 13, 1956, Syracuse, N.Y.
