

# Even at Eugene?



By **BLAINE NEWHAM**  
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## JUST A thought.

Although there is no question that next Thursday's 5,000-meter race involving Steve Prefontaine, Frank Shorter and Paul Geis will be the best American distance race so far this year, the international flavor has disappeared with the disabling injury to Olympic champion Lasse Viren.

You believe Pre when he tells you that he's sorry Lasse, the double distance champ at Munich, won't run in Eugene at the NCAA Preparation Meet.

"Nobody is more disappointed about this than I am," said Pre. "It takes a little off losing Viren. It would have been nice having him here to kick some European butt. But I'll be prepared either way."

It is recognized worldwide, believe it or not, that Pre has never lost a race over a mile in Eugene, even though Hayward Field has hosted the American collegiate championships, the American open championships, and the Olympic Trials.

In the monthly issues of Track and Field News, Pre's pre-eminence is duly noted.

Wrote Scott Stanford of Placentia, Calif.:

"The fact that Pre has never been beaten in Eugene means, if he remains in good physical health, he will never be beaten there. The accomplishments of Pre surpass any distance runner in the world and Pre will remain No. 1 until someone beats him in Eugene."

Paul Merca of Seattle:

"Since the AAU will be held in Eugene in '75 I have a proposal to make to the AAU: Invite the top 5,000 runners in the world to Eugene. Then maybe the world will know whether or not Prefontaine is unbeatable in Eugene. I would love to come to Eugene to see this."

**BRENDAN FOSTER**

*Let me at Pre*

is unbeatable in Eugene. I would love to come to Eugene to see this."

And Greg Haertl of Portland writes:

"Pre is the greatest American distance runner ever, and would destroy any competition — Foster included — at any distance at Eugene in May. When Pre gets in front of his people, something mystical happens. Pre is unbeatable in Eugene at any distance above a mile, no matter who he races. If only the Olympics were in Eugene."

**ALL OF** this commentary did not go unnoticed. Especially not in Great Britain, the home of Brendan Foster, currently track and field's most celebrated long distance runner. Foster is the world record-holder for two miles and 3,000 meters.

Cliff Temple of the London Times interviewed Foster for Track and Field News.

Temple asked Foster: "There has been a lot of correspondence about Steve Prefontaine in Track and Field News, with people saying, 'Let Foster & Co. come and run against Pre at Eugene in May.' What do you think about that?"

And Foster's reply:

"Yes, I'd love to run against him. A lot of my club-mates at Gateshead read T&FN avidly, and because of that, and because Pre is always getting big writeups in the magazine when he breaks records, the lads rate him very highly. And for that reason I'd derive a lot of satisfaction out of beating him. I've only run one race against him, at the Coca-Cola meeting in London last September (a two-mile in which Pre dropped out). I'd like to go across to America and run against him. He's no way as good as Stewart or Bedford or Black."

Even at Eugene?

"Some people can run very well when they've got no competition," said Foster. "He might be that sort of bloke."

Hmmm. The cocky American against the cocky Britisher. A promoter's dream.

**THE UNIVERSITY** of Oregon will no longer pay to fly Lasse Viren from Finland to Eugene. Why not consider bringing in Brendan Foster for the world's best 5,000-meter race of the 1975 track and field season?

A year ago, they questioned the value of bringing Rick Wohlhuter to Eugene for his assault on the world 880 record. Wohlhuter was a bargain.

The question, really, is whether Foster would come for expenses, or does he, like some amateurs, have a "fee?"

Fees are paid in different ways. For Saturday night's "Dream Mile," promoters in Kingston, Jamaica paid \$7,100 out of their \$65,000 budget to bring Filbert Bayi, two teammates and a coach from Tanzania.

Perhaps Pre, Shorter and Geis are enough. That field may well fill Hayward Field to the point that adding Foster would only be a competitive, not an economic, advantage.

It would excite people. There's no question of that.

Following Foster's comments in Track and Field News, a reader, former WSU miler, Rick Riley, says, "I enjoyed the Foster interview. One thing, however, where Foster is off-base — Pre is definitely better than Bedford (take that, you Limeys) and as good as Black. After all, Pre did get fourth in '72 while Davey was back in the ruck."

And, writes L. A. Floerke of New York City: "My goodness, only four letters in your April issue mentioning Steve Prefontaine. And not one heaping lavish praise on him. Where have all the Pre fans gone? Are they already preparing for his reincarnation as Bill McChesney? Stay tuned, readers."