



Flashy field

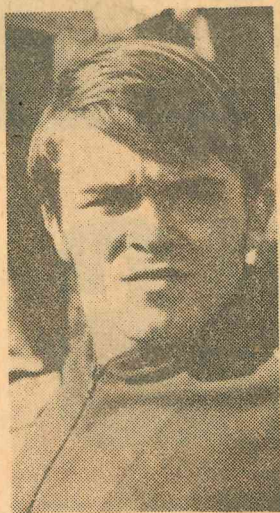
By **BLAINE NEWNHAM**
Register-Guard Sports Editor

"WHAT DO I know about the field?"

Steve Prefontaine repeated the question and then relished in giving the answer. He was talking about Friday night's two-mile in the Los Angeles Times Invitational indoor meet.

"I know that Kerry O'Brien from Australia is the world record-holder for the steeplechase and the indoor world record-holder at two miles," he began.

"I know that Emiel Puttemans from Belgium is the world record-holder for two miles outdoors.



**STEVE
PREFONTAINE**

"I know that George Young is the king of American distance runners. He's the national outdoor record-holder at two miles. He's 34 years of age, the prime for long distance runners.

"I know that Frank Shorter is one of the world's great marathon runners, and that he is the American indoor two-mile record-holder."

Pre is excited.

The last time he was excited about a race he lapped Jim Ryun running that 8:26.6 two-mile in Portland. The challenge that time was Ryun, who proved unworthy.

This time it is the aura

of international competition.

Last season Pre didn't lose a race at either three miles or 5,000 meters—including victories against the Soviet Union and in the Pan-American Games—and yet ranked no better than 10th in the world because of his lack of international competition.

He'll get a stomach full Friday night.

Puttemans' pending world record of 8:17.8 and O'Brien's world indoor mark of 8:19.2 are the fastest two miles ever run—indoors or outdoors.

THE HAUNTING THING about an indoor race is that you are never sure what kind of shape the competition is in, whether a guy is looking for a free trip to Southern California or really wants a race.

You know what Pre—who after verbally assaulting Southern California last year ranks with smog and freeways on the Southland popularity list—is going down for. He'll spend eight minutes or so running around that track in The Forum and will be off for Eugene.

Perhaps the confrontation with Puttemans is the most intriguing.

"He's a lot like me," said Pre. "When he ran his world record last year he didn't do it with a blazing last lap. He runs a hard pace."

A hard pace by Puttemans would play right into Pre's game plan.

In Portland Pre twice moved over for others to take the lead. None would go so Pre went himself.

If Puttemans would take the first mile in 4:10 or 4:12, the stage would be set for a great race and a great time.

Pre secretly wanted to run 8:22 in Portland and thought had the pace been forced earlier he might have. He's that ready to run.

"My workouts indicate that I can run that fast," he said. Only Pre doesn't necessarily think 8:22 is that fast.

"Last year I ran 8:31 indoors. This year I should run 8:26 or faster; I'm a year older, a year stronger, a year more mentally experienced. I've got just that many more miles behind me," he says.

As are all the men of Bill Bowerman, Prefontaine is training for the summer, for the NCAA, for the Olympic Trials, and for the Games themselves.

AFTER FRIDAY NIGHT'S big race, Prefontaine will withdraw. The long outdoor campaign will follow a week's respite.

"I'm taking a week off," he said.

Like heck.

For a guy who normally runs 15 miles a day, taking a day off means jogging five miles through Hendricks Park.

"I really find a run like that relaxing, especially if it might be a different place where I can see different things. One day I like to go to the park, another day downtown, or across the river on the trails around Autzen Stadium."

Pre will then begin weeks of overdistance training, building strength that will sustain him through the Olympic Trials on the long, arduous road to Munich.

"I have confidence that Bill Dellinger and Bill Bowerman will get me ready," he said. "I'm in their hands."

TRACK SHORTS . . . Track and Field News has made its predictions on the composition of the U.S. Olympic team and the medal winners in the Olympics. Prefontaine gets an A (almost certain to make the team) as a member of the U.S. contingent and a C (possible chance to win) in the 5,000 meters at Munich. Nobody ranked higher than C in that event. Others: Russ Francis was TF&N's choice to make the team in the javelin with Cary Feldmann and Bill Skinner; Bouncy Moore was the magazine's fourth pick in the long jump behind Bob Beamon, Henry Hines and Arnie Robinson (three make the team); Mike Manley and Steve Savage joined Sid Sink as TF&N's top three Americans in the steeplechase; Steve Stageberg was the No. 2 choice in the 5,000 behind Pre; and Kenny Moore ranked with Frank Shorter as the top two Americans in the marathon.