

Liquori - Pre battle back on AAU agenda

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (AP) — Two of America's top milers step down to the half-mile but there's competition aplenty in the featured mile event at the AAU track and field championships starting Thursday.

Marty Liquori, originally entered in the three-mile because of injury, switched back to the mile late Tuesday night and the former Villanova ace tackles, among others, Steve Prefontaine, Oregon's distance ace.

Others in the mile include Howell Michael, Reggie McAfee, iron man Tommy Fulton, Len Hilton and Oregon runners Mark Feig and Scott Daggat.

Meanwhile, 3:57.1 miler Dave Wottle and 3:58.8 miler Rick Wohlhuter hook up in a classic battle of late-kicking half-milers. The winner could break Wohlhuter's two-week-old world mark of 1:44.6.

The three-day, 85th AAU championships come 10 months after a spectacular Olympic Games. The year following the Games is traditionally a "down" year in track in America.

NOT 1973. American records are definite possibilities in the 100, 220, 440, 880, steeplechase, high hurdles, shot put and the javelin.

In fact, this could be the best javelin competition ever held in this country. The last time an American held the world mark was when Al Cantello recorded 282-3½ on June 5, 1959. Since then Europeans have dominated the event and the world record is 308-8 by

Klaus Wolfermann of West Germany.

The AAU meet features America's second longest thrower ever, Cary Feldmann, at 298-4, defending champ Fred Luke, with a lifetime best of 277-5, and Kansas Sam Colson at 290-10.

Oregon's Mac Wilkins, the NCAA champion, is in the discus.

Liquori, suffering from a pulled left thigh muscle, originally chose the three-mile but when he ran a fast workout Tuesday he told meet officials he wanted back into the mile.

PREFONTAINE HAS said he'd go out and set a hot pace and that's just what Liquori wants. "I'd like to post a fast time, so I can prove I'm back," said the 3:58.0 runner who was injured last year.

The top two finishers in this meet qualify to compete on the U.S. team later this year in Europe and that squad will meet the Russians in a dual meet July 23-24 at Minsk.

The top foes for Liquori and Pre figure to be Fulton, Texas Southern's superman who ran eight races in three days at the NAIA meet and recorded a quick 3:57.8 mile.

Wottle and Wohlhuter will aim for the world record in the 800-meter run as well as the 880 since officials have said they'll time all runners at both distances. The metric world mark is 1:44.3 by Wottle, Peter Snell and Ralph Doubell.

Oregon's Steve Pence is another entry in the 800 while

Tom Hale of the Oregon Track Club goes in the six-mile and Paul Geis of OTC in the three-mile.