

Track and Field



Penn Relays



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Springtime Carnival

It is a track meet, a sun-worshipping rite, a relay carnival and an international festival all rolled into one event. For one week-end every spring, thousands of runners and jumpers, throwers and putters come from throughout the Western Hemisphere to participate in the Penn Relays at Franklin Field on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

With more than a hundred events (counting qualifying heats) stretched over the two days, and several thousand athletes, coaches and officials milling around the track and infield, it is difficult to believe that the event is organized—yet it is. For more than 80 years, this traditional spring gala has produced some classic duels and match-ups as it draws on the best amateur athletes in competition, collegiate squads from throughout the country and high-school performers from all along the Eastern seaboard as well as from the Caribbean Islands.

Among the traditions at the Penn Relays is that Villanova—located in Philadelphia—almost always wins a relay title, and in the 83rd running of the meet in 1977, the tradition was kept

alive as Ed Takacs, Glenn Bogue, Mark Belger and Phil Kane provided the Wildcats with their 12th consecutive distance medley relay title. The key to victory was Belger's record split of 2 min 50.1 in the 1,200-yard third leg in which he received the baton 15 yards behind the pacesetter and not only made up the deficit but also opened up a 15-yard gap before handing the stick off to Tiny Kane. In all, Villanova has won nearly 60 different championships at the Penn Relays.

Among the other highlights at the 83rd Relays were Wilson Waigwa's dramatic come-from-behind victory in the open mile. Waigwa, a Kenyan attending Texas-El Paso, was timed in 3 min 53.8. U.S. Olympian Herman Frazier, a native of Philadelphia running for Arizona State, anchored 3 relay teams as the Sun Devils won the 400 m in 39.57 sec, set a collegiate record in the 1,600 m with a 3 min 01.9, and established a world record in the 800 with a 1 min 21.4. And in the open 100 m, Steve Riddick was a shade ahead of world record holders Steve Williams and Donald Quarrie.

Riddick vs. Williams at the Penn Relays