

Duck star just misses record

Pre destroys Los Angeles field

LOS ANGELES — "To go out and run a race like this, just mainly on strength, is very satisfying," said Steve Prefontaine.

The University of Oregon star had just obliterated a star-studded two-mile field in the Sunkist Invitational indoor track meet.

Prefontaine narrowly missed an American indoor record, running 8:27.4 or just 1.2 seconds off the mark.

His feat was one of many that thrilled the Sports Arena crowd of 12,106 who saw two world indoor records fall.

Pole vaulter Steve Smith and shot-putter Al Feuerbach set the records while Dave Wottle had the crowd on its feet with another brilliant finish that edged Kenya's Kip Keino in the mile.

SMITH CLEARED 17-11 after arriving just 15 minutes before the meet and taking no practice jumps.

Feuerbach threw 69-4½ and actually got his record on a technicality.

Feuerbach had thrown 69-4¾ last year in Pocatello, Ida., but the record was not accepted because he had worn tape on his hand. This time it was legal.

The crowd had pointed for the two-mile, with such competitors as Prefontaine, Lasse Viren (gold medalist in Munich in 5000 and 10,000 meters), Frank Shorter (gold medalist in the marathon), Marty Liquori and Mark Winzenreid.

Prefontaine took the mystery out of it. He took the lead in the first 10 yards, never relented, and won after lapping two competitors on the 160-yard, 11-laps-to-the-mile oval.

Viren, sick recently and not adjusted to American foods, finished sixth and was never a factor.

Pre had a five-yard lead at the half-mile on Shorter and ran three-quarters in 3:10.6. Viren was already

15 yards behind, but Shorter was just three yards back. With a half-mile to go, Pre was nearly half a lap in front of Liquori, who finished second in 8:38.8, the same time as Tracy Smith, running his first indoor race in three years.

"**WHEN YOU'VE** had a fall like I've had," Prefontaine said, "you have your doubts. I started to work out again two months after the (Olympic) Games and I started too hard. I was very injury-prone. Up to three days ago, I had tendonitis in the knee and wasn't sure if I would come.

"I'm very self-satisfied and this race will serve as a motivational factor. It's one of those things you can't express in words. A win of this nature will put me on a positive trail as far as continuing in athletics for at least two more years."

He was surprised how things went. "It was strange when I looked

behind and didn't see anybody. I wish Viren had been feeling well because if he or someone else had pushed me, maybe I could have broken the American record."

Liquori, who ran the mile the night before in Philadelphia, said Prefontaine "won the race just after the half mile. I looked up, looked up again, and he was gone."

SHORTER, FIFTH in 8:40.6 behind Peter Kaal, concurred. "Once he gets away," said Shorter, "he doesn't come back. I knew he was going to win when he got about 15 yards in front of me."

Smith, who won't be eligible for collegiate competition this spring because he sat out the first semester at Cal State — Long Beach, said he was aiming at 17-11 after going 17-8½ last week in Maryland and 17-4 Friday night in Philadelphia.

Feuerbach had a consistently good series of puts, but set the world

record on his first throw. His marks were 69-4¾, 67-9½, 66-3¼, 68-8½, foul, 68-¾.

"Seventy feet is obviously possible indoors," Feuerbach said, "but I'm not pointing for it because when you put too much pressure on yourself, you lose something."

WOTTLE RAN without his familiar cap, which he says he doesn't need indoors because there's no wind.

Keino fell to another of Wottle's last-ditch triumphs. While Winzenreid and Willie Eashman remained near the lead throughout the race, Wottle was in last most of the time, Keino content to run with the field.

As the final lap approached, Wottle had moved up to third, and as the tape came into view, he poured it on, to nip Keino at the finish. Both were timed in 4:06.1.