

Pre does 8:24.6 as Geis follows

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They ended the Steve Prefontaine era at Hayward Field Tuesday night, but there was much to suggest that the Paul Geis era is not far behind.

Tuesday night it was two-tenths of a second.

The past and future of University of Oregon distance running swept through an extemporaneous Twilight Meet with epic swiftness as Prefontaine ran the fastest two-mile in the world this year at 8:24.6 and Geis established a number of meaty ponderables with a not-very-far-behind 8:24.8.

Among other things, Geis' time ranks him as the third fastest American two-miler of all time (behind Pre's American record of 8:19.4 and George Young's 8:22.0), sets a world 20-year-old age group record by bettering Gerry Lindgren's 8:31.6, and places him 11th on the all-time world list of two-milers.

It was also six seconds faster than Pre ran as a sophomore, and faster than Kip Keino (8:25.2) has ever run.

THE MEET PRODUCED a few other startling things, namely Steve Bence's lifetime best 1:48.2 in the halfmile as the Oregon sophomore easily qualified for the NCAA meet, and the seed of a feud between the celebrated twosome, Pre and Geis.

"When he says he's going to do something," snorted Pre, "then he'd better darn do it."

"Next time he does something like that I'll

take him through a 4:05 first-mile and see how he likes it.

"And you can quote me on that."

Pre contended that Geis reneged on a pre-race agreement to alternate leading laps throughout the body of the race.

"I'm a little disappointed," continued Pre. "It makes it more enjoyable when you get help with the pace. He led one lap, that was all. I didn't like doing all the work."

"He's a very fine runner, there's no doubt about that. And I'm sure he'll do many great things for the university. But right now he'll have to grow up a little."

Except for the third lap when Geis did lead, it was Pre the last 1½ miles. Mark Feig, who had earlier run sixth in the 880, led the first two laps in 2:06. Geis pulled them through the 1,320 in 3:10, it was Pre at the mile in 4:14 and from then on.

Geis hung tough, however, and Pre didn't shake him until they went into the final turn 180 yards from home.

PRE WON COMFORTABLY, but it was Geis who roared by him in the victory lap race. He raised both hands to the crowd and was in ecstasy as Pre's people cheered.

Geis wasn't ducking Pre's charges.

"I don't blame him, I really don't," he said.

"I told him I'd alternate the lead if I felt good. If not, I'd hold on until I died."

"What happened was that I didn't die as soon as I thought I would. In fact, I didn't die until the last 100 yards."

Geis was concerned that Pre was concerned.

"I'm sorry I didn't feel strong enough to lead; maybe it's my inexperience. I consider us good friends and I'm going to try to get a hold of him to talk."

For Geis, the last two weeks have been slightly amazing. He ran 13:18.8 for three miles in Bakersfield a week ago Saturday, ran sixth in the 7.8-mile Bay-to-Breakers distance run in San Francisco the next day and then three days ago ran an 8:36.4 behind Emiel Putteman's 8:26.6 in the Vons Classic two-mile. Putteman's mark led the world until Tuesday night.

"Bill Dellinger told me last weekend that he thought I was capable of running 8:24 to 8:28," continued Geis. "That really blew my mind. . . I was thinking 8:32."

"It's obvious that I ran 12 seconds better tonight than I did in Los Angeles because Pre was in the race. I can thank him for leading and for the fast time."

PREFONTAINE WAS AS impressed with the times as were the 3,400 in attendance.

"I didn't think I could run that fast," he said. "I would have been satisfied with 8:30 or 8:35. I haven't done much training in a



(Register-Guard photos by Wayne Eastburn)

World's best two-mile in the twilight

month."

He admitted that his sore hip bothered him early in the race.

"I felt it early, but Paul was right on my tail, and I forgot about my pains. I was concentrating on winning the race."

"I would have liked to have brought the seventh lap down to 60 seconds to finish him off, but I didn't have the confidence in my conditioning to do that."

Pre was asked how far away he is from top condition.

"About 20 seconds," he said. "About 8:10 to 8:14."

Lasse Viren's world record is 8:14.0.

Besides Bence's 1:48.2, Tim Vollmer won the discus duel with Mac Wilkins by 202-10 to 196-6, Bob Martin ran a 21.3 in the 220, Clay Lowrey of Oregon State ran a backup 1:48.7 in the 880, Scott Daggatt showed a return to form with a 4:03.1 mile victory, and Knut Kvalheim ran a fine 2:55 three-quarter mile in that race.

Craig Blackman ran a season's best 48.2 for the 440 to win the fourth place on the Oregon mile relay team. Freshman James Holloway was a 10th back at 48.3.

WHILE BENCE MADE the qualifying mark, miler Gary Barger (4:08.7) didn't and

Mike Long, who won the steeplechase in a slow 9:20.2, probably didn't impress enough to make the traveling squad to the NCAA meet.

Bence got a standing ovation after his 880 victory.

"Wow," he said, "a lifetime best. I never dreamed I'd go that fast."

Bence got help from Hailu Ebba, the Oregon State miler who forced the pace with 300 yards to go.

"I told him I needed help," said Bence. "I really felt him on the turn and I imagined him being right on my shoulder down the straight."

"He's really a good guy; I like him."

Hailu was there for a while, but wilted and jogged in with a 1:50.4.

"I was hurting badly," commented Hailu, "but I wanted to give him some competition. I told him before the race I'd probably only run a 660."

Bence attempted to explain his subpar performance up to this meet.

"I never really did take any of those early races seriously," he said. "I probably trained through them. I pointed the whole year for the Pac-8 and then I hurt my leg just before the meet."

"Tonight I think I could have run faster."



Bence: Happy qualifier