

Pre (who else?) controls the distances

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second in a four-part series analyzing the National Collegiate Association track and field championships June 1-3 at Hayward Field. Today, the distances.

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The voluminous entry lists for this weekend's NCAA championships at Hayward Field read like a testimony to Steve Prefontaine.

Although on Wednesday morning Oregon coach Bill Bowerman will undoubtedly scratch

Pre from the mile and six mile, right now his name is No. 1 for the mile, three and six. And it isn't even close.

Pre is almost two seconds faster than the nearest miler (Dave Wottle of Bowling Green at 3:58.5), 22 seconds faster than the nearest three-miler (Michael Keogh of Manhattan at 13:26.6) and 18 seconds faster than the best of the rest of six milers (Cornelius Cusack of E. Tennessee State at 27:40.6).

PERHAPS MORE THAN any other athlete in the NCAA championships, Pre has a lock on his event, the 5,000-meter

run. He is the American record holder (13:29.8) and has twice won NCAA championships. He is also a two-time NCAA cross country champion.

Still, to suggest that there is a lack of talent in the NCAA distances would be inaccurate. The 1,500 meters, for example, has five men who have run well under four minutes for the mile.

And, in the six mile, defending champion Garry Bjorklund of Minnesota, the former collegiate record holder, should return to defend his crown although he has yet to meet a qualifying standard of 29:15.0.

Bjorklund, who has a lifetime best 27:24.6 (which was the collegiate record until Pre ran 27:22.3 at Bakersfield earlier this year), has been bothered by injuries and has not run a six-mile this year.

However, Minnesota will undoubtedly petition the Games Committee to let Bjorklund into the field.

WITH DEFENDING champion Mark Winzenried graduated, the 800 meters is a wide-open event, especially in light of the ineligibility of California's Rick Brown, who was second to Win-

zenried last year as a freshman and recently won the Pac-8 championship in 1:47.7.

(All University of California athletes are ineligible because of probationary status caused by a football recruiting violation.)

The best time in the 880 goes to Bob Smith from LSU, the Southeast Conference champion at 1:47.6.

There are others, like Ron Phillips of Illinois, the third-place finisher last year who has run 1:46.2 this season, or Pat Collins of Oregon State, the runner-up in the 1970 NCAA with a lifetime best of 1:46.5.

"I'll get back down there in about two weeks," Collins said after putting away Oregon freshman Steve Bence with a 1:49.5 in the Northern Division championships.

At the Pac-8, however, Collins showed lack of distance work and faded to fifth in 1:51.4. Based on his experience and ability, however, Collins must be rated with the best.

Bence, with a lifetime best of 1:55.2 for 800 meters prior to this season, placed second behind Brown in the Pac-8 880 in 1:48.6. Both Bence and team-

mates Wes Smylie, third in that race in 1:49.1, should be considered, especially running before the vocal throng at Hayward Field.

Marcel Philippe of Fordham, fourth in the NCAA last year in (1:49.7), sixth placer Greg Jones of UTEP (1:49.8) and finalist Tony Waldrop of North Carolina, who has run 1:48.8 this season, are others.

A COUPLE OF college division runners — Jay Fabian of Ashland (fourth in the NCAA last year) and Tom Fulton of Texas Southern (1:48.5) — could be factors, as could WAC champ Reid Cole of New Mexico (1:49.1), Jim Schaper of South Carolina (1:49.3), and Southern Conference champion James Kidd from East Carolina (1:49.5).

Another defending champion is gone in the 1,500 meters — Marty Liquori of Villanova, who won it three consecutive years.

Eastern runners again have the apparent strength here, although Oregon State's Hailu, whose 3:59.3 mile early in the season and 3:40.4 1,500 meters (the equivalent of a 3:57.4 mile) puts him in serious contention.

Wottle of Bowling Green

scored an impressive 3:58.5 victory in taking the King Games mile. He was second in the 1970 NCAA and has experience.

Although he's run just 4:02.1 this season, Duke's Bob Wheeler was second to Liquori in Seattle last year as a freshman and has a lifetime best of 3:59.9.

Others who have been under four minutes are Lee Labadie of Illinois (lifetime best of 3:58.4) and Jerome Howe of Kansas State (3:59.4).

Kerry Eillison of Texas El Paso, the WAC champion at 4:02.1, gave some early indication of what he can do by anchoring UTEP to second place in the Texas Relays distance medley with a 3:57.8 mile. Kansas State won that race with Howe anchoring in 3:57.9.

IN THE FIELD against Pre in the 5,000 will be people like Greg Fredericks of Penn State, second last year in 13:31.6. Fredericks has a lifetime best of 13:28.0, well off Pre's 12:58.6 lifetime best and 13:04 run this year en route to his American 5,000 meter record.

Other 5,000 competition should come from Michael Keogh of Manhattan, second in the King

Games at 13:26.6. Paul Baldwin of Kentucky has run 13:17.4 while John Halberstadt of Oklahoma State, a transplanted South African, is a 4:01.1 miler who has run 13:33. Halberstadt turned in an 8:33.8 two-mile Saturday at Modesto.

If Bjorklund is allowed to run, he should be the class of the 10,000 field. He was last year.

Others to watch are Cusack, Talberstadt (27:54.2), and Richard Sliney, a Englishman from Northern Arizona who has run 8:44 two-mile and 13:28.2 three-mile. He has also run an 8:35 indoor two mile.

With Sid Sink of Bowling Green and Oregon's Steve Savage gone, the steeplechase appears to belong to Georgetown's Joseph Lucas, who was sixth last year but so far this season has the nation's top time at 8:35.0 while winning the King Games. Pac-8 champion Bill Koes of Washington (8:42.0) and former Pac-8 champ Jim Johnson (8:43.0), also of Washington, Steve Kelley of Indiana (8:42.2) and Federation champion Randy Smith of Wichita State (8:43.3) figure to provide competition.