

Pre's record hopes dashed by weather

By JOHN CONRAD
Of the Register-Guard

It should be said of Steve Prefontaine that his courage is every bit a match for his talent. But even he knows that it's not nice to fool around with Mother Nature, particularly while running 10,000 meters.

"You don't think about setting records at that distance unless everything is right," Pre conceded Saturday after posting a 28:09.4 time for the event — as well as a 27:18.6 six-mile — in the annual Twilight Meet at Hayward Field.

It was something of a come down after what Prefontaine did in this meet a year ago, running to American records for six miles (26:51.8) and then 10,000 meters (27:43.6). But Pre was not only satisfied, he was downright pleased considering the cold, windy conditions.

"It's really satisfying to fight the elements like that and still get that kind of time," he said. "I'm extremely happy with my conditioning.

"If the weather conditions had been right I would have run faster

than last year for sure. I could have run another mile or two at 69-second pace . . . I could go out and jog five or six miles right now . . . I'm not even tired."

Although Prefontaine didn't threaten his American records, his times were still world class despite the conditions. His six-mile time — without a finishing kick — would have landed him third on the world list for last year, behind only Pre's 26:51.8 and Frank Shorter's 27:09.6. His 10,000 time would place him sixth on last year's world list.

The world records are 26:47.0 for six miles, 27:30.8 for the 10,000.

While Prefontaine was the highlight of the Twilight meet for the umpteenth time, there were some good performances by several Oregon athletes, despite the fact they were competing under wraps this week on orders from Coach Bill Dellinger.

Bruce Hill had a personal best of 59-2 in the shot, Tinker Hatfield pole vaulted 16-3 and Jeff Carter had a season best in the javelin with a 247-8 throw.

There was no sub-four minute mile, Gary Barger winning in 4:02.7, but that didn't disappoint Dellinger. He wanted Barger and Lars Kaupang (4:03.2) to qualify for the Pac-8 and NCAA meets, and both did. So did Peter Spir (8:53.4), Tom McChesney (8:56.4) and Dale Hammitt (8:57.2) in the steeplechase.

"The meet served its purpose," commented Dellinger.

Prefontaine heartily agreed.

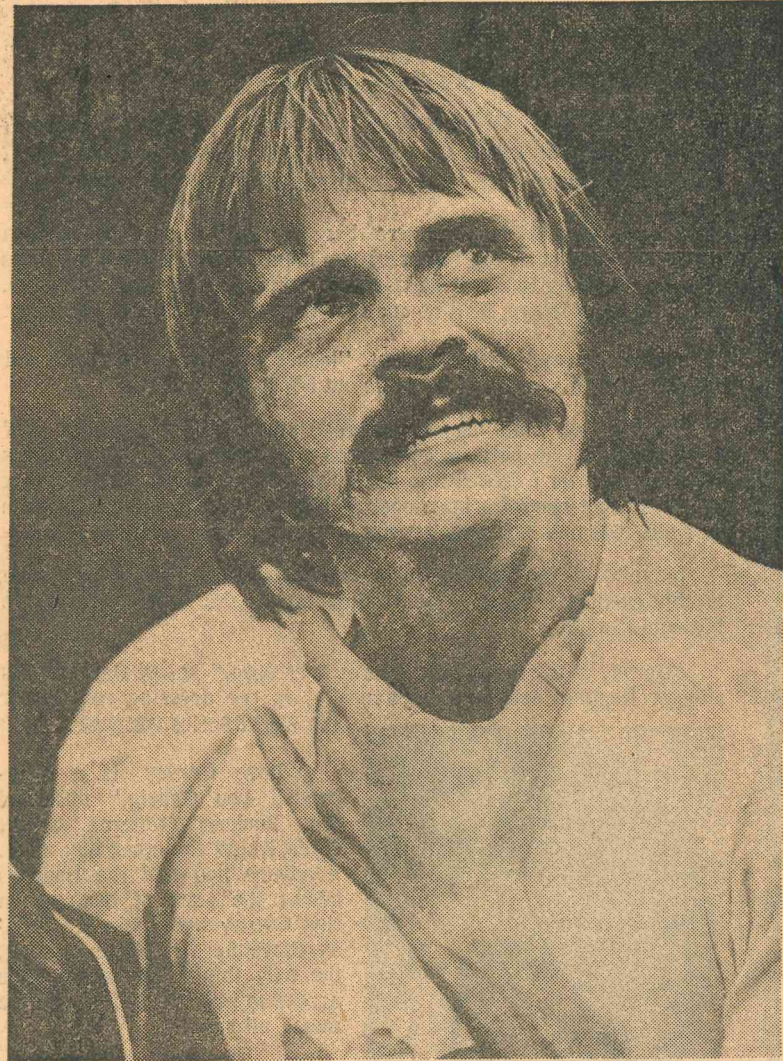
"I didn't even have a plan for the race because the conditions were so lousy," said Pre, who was paced for five laps by David Taylor but then ran all by himself the rest of the way.

"After two miles the wind really got to me," Pre said. "My shoulders tightened up and my stomach bothered me from breathing all that cold air.

"My lower body felt fine, but I just couldn't relax."

Prefontaine was matching record pace for the first three miles,

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(Register-Guard photo by Steve Thompson)

Cold air isn't the best for breathing

Steve Prefontaine explains the problems after chilly run