

Track and Field



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To Keep A Promise

When an injury prevented him from competing in the 1978 Drake Relays, Steve Scott made a promise. Not only would he return the following year, he said, but he would break the record for the mile. Scott, a determined young man who is a strong, all-around athlete, was a man of his word. Getting a big lift from a cheering crowd, Scott became the first man in the 70-year history of the event to break the four-minute barrier, clocking 3:55.26.

Scott, one of the world's outstanding milers, has set himself a deceptively simple goal for personal improvement. Each year, his target is to better his records of the previous year. This is an object he has been able to achieve eight years in a row, reaching a peak in 1979 when he set an American indoor record with a time of 3:54.1 during a meet in San Diego.

He also has managed a best of 3:52.9 outdoors, and if he continues to improve his times each year, the blond Californian will be a threat to snap a 72-year jinx that has haunted American milers. Not since Mel Sheppard in 1908 has a U.S. runner won the Olympic 1,500 meters. "I'm aware of the situation," Scott said, "but

I'm not letting it stop me. The man I feel I'll have to beat is Steve Ovett of Britain, who isn't well known here but has been unbeaten for two years. Everyone else I feel I'm capable of beating."

Oddly, even though he was the American record holder, Scott himself isn't as well known in the U.S. as his ability would merit, but he says this doesn't concern him. Scott, who is 6'1", and 160 lb, started running cross-country in high school because he was too small to play football "and I wanted to do something athletically." In his junior year he started running the half mile, and when he attended the University of California at Irvine, his coach, Len Miller, turned him into a miler.

"He said I had the stamina from being able to run cross-country, plus the speed since I did a 1:50 half-mile," Scott said. In 1977, Scott won the AAU 1,500 meter outdoor championship, and the following year he captured the NCAA crown. Scott studied to be a teacher, but now would prefer to go into business.

STEVE SCOTT

Born May 5, 1956, Upland, Calif.