



PREFONTAINE OBLIGES AUTOGRAPH-SEEKERS AFTER HIS DAZZLING RUN IN EUGENE

And when it comes, I'll learn to live with it, but it won't be my first love."

But while in no hurry, Pre doesn't expect to suffer through another summer in Europe. "I'm not the little lamb any more," he says. "Last summer I didn't know what I was doing, but I've become stronger and faster, and where I had 100% confidence before, I've got 100% on top of that. I've been in international competition and now I know what the big boys can do. You don't go out and just run. There's an offense and a defense. When I go back this summer I might not blow anybody off the track, but they'll know I'm there."

The strength, like the confidence, has always been there, and more of both will come. His speed is the key, and it is here, despite Bowerman's fears that Pre might never have as much as he would like, that Pre has shown great improvement. In just a year he has dropped his times in the 100 from 11.2 to 10.7; in the 220 from 25 to 23.2; and in the 440 from 51 to 49. "I can feel myself getting faster all the time," he says. "I work a lot with Roscoe for speed, and he works a lot with me for strength. I don't know if I can keep improving as rapidly as I have this past year, but if I do. . . ." He laughs. "Who knows, maybe in a couple of years I'll

stop running distances and run dashes."

And so last Friday, Steve Prefontaine turned out to see if his newly won speed would help him improve his 4:00.4. "There's no way I can win this race," he said. "But I'm going to try. But if I don't win and I get under four minutes, that would be just as beautiful."

The race was made for a sub-four-minute; the weather was ideal, without a hint of wind, and the track was exceptionally fast. Made of urethane, it had been donated to the university by the late Donald M. Stevenson (class of 1908) and Mrs. Stevenson, and is of the same material that will be used at the 1972 Olympics. "When the Stevensons called and said they'd like to do something for our track program," Bowerman says, "I suggested a rubber asphalt-type all-weather track. Something around \$25,000. They asked how that compared to other compositions. I said it was like buying a Ford and, of course, you could go all the way up to an Olympic-type Cadillac. A week later they called back and told me to buy the Cadillac."

The race was the highlight of the track dedication ceremonies, and it began as expected, with senior Jim Gorman playing the rabbit's role and setting a .59 first-quarter pace. Prefontaine was running third, with Divine seventh. Bow-

erman wanted a 2:00 half. Instead he got a 2:01, and Prefontaine, annoyed at the slow pace, moved sooner than he would have liked. He had the lead at the three-quarters (3:02), and then everybody turned it on.

Into the final lap, with the crowd on its feet and making enough noise for twice its number, Prefontaine kicked. Wilborn made a move at him, but was held off as they went down the backstretch. Then it was all Divine, from fourth to third as they entered the final turn, and then past Prefontaine in the middle of the turn, and home in 3:56.3, his seventh sub-four and his fastest, and the fastest in the world this year. Prefontaine finished in 3:57.4 (third fastest in the world this year). Then came Wilborn (3:58.2), Norm Trerise, an alumnus from Canada (3:59.1) and Steve Savage, a junior steeplechaser (3:59.2). Five in all, and even in Eugene they don't ask for more than that. Bringing up the rear were sophomore Bob Rhen (4:01.6) and senior Tom Morrow (4:01.8).

"How about that?" Prefontaine exulted. "A beautiful sub-four-minute mile. And since it was Roscoe who beat me, I don't even mind that. And that great crowd. Did you hear them?"

And then Bowerman, who is running for the State House of Representatives, following a trail blazed by his father, who was acting governor of Oregon (1910-11), came over to congratulate his youngsters, and they all ducked. He has a dry sense of humor and, while they enjoy it, his athletes are wary of his practical jokes. "Nice going, fellows," he said, and they relaxed. "I guess it wasn't too bad—for a time trial."

"How many sub-four-minute milers does that make, Bill?" said Prefontaine. His athletes call him Bill or Mr. Bowerman, never Coach. It stems from his own days as a track and football star at Oregon. He says his football coach was one of the meanest men in the world, and he insisted upon being called Coach.

"Let's see," said Bowerman. "You and Savage make it nine and 10. Or is it 11? No, 10, as undergraduates. Then if you count Trerise and Jim Grelle, who did it after he got out of school, that makes 12." He thought about that for a moment. Then the mockery came back into his eyes. "Not bad for a guy who won't recruit, is it?" he said and went back up his mountain. **END**