

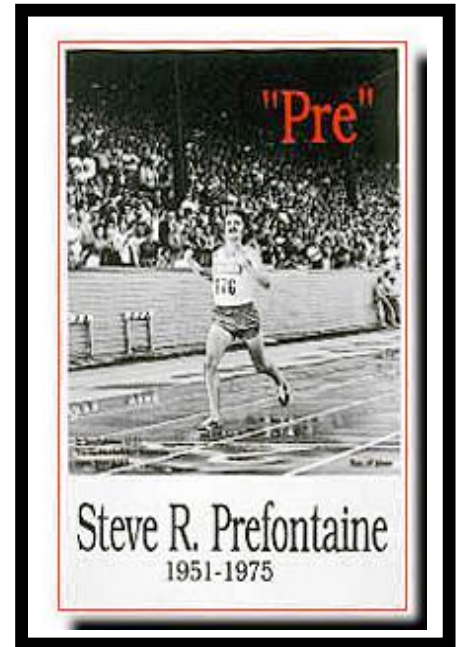
Steve Prefontaine - An American Legend

Pre's Eulogy by his High School Coach

This is a most difficult task that I have been charged to perform, a task that I am neither prepared for, nor one I ever thought would be required of me. I am here not to mourn Steve Prefontaine, but rather to pay final tribute to an outstanding young American.

Greatness is for only a few. The accomplishments of such an individual are often recognized years after the deed, the act. Steve Prefontaine achieved this level during his brief lifetime. He was always in a hurry, His destiny could not allow for a wasted effort.

I would not say that Pre was the last to leave the gym after a workout as many might believe, but rather he was generally the first, so intense was his concentration in a workout, so great his effort, and so valuable his time.



Pre had his beginning in track life on this very track as a student at Marshfield Junior High School. He was a district champion as a lightweight 8th grader in the 1320. The following fall he moved up on the hill and turned out for cross-country at Marshfield High School as a freshman. He was an exciting prospect. He neared 10 minutes in the 2 mile that spring. It was at the district cross-country meet his sophomore year that we started to realize that Pre was destined to be more than just another good high school runner. He finished 3rd that day, losing to the defending state mile champion, and the state cross-country champion of a week hence. A week later he finished 6th in the state cross-country championship, and in both of these races he was even with the pack or leading until the final 330 yards where the endurance factor ended and speed took over. The following spring, Pre failed to qualify for the state 2 mile at the district meet. This was a bitter disappointment for Steve at the time, but it was to be the turning point of his career as a prep runner.

He was a 2 time state champion in cross-country setting records both his junior and senior years, record holder of the state high school indoor mile, state 2 mile champ and record holder as a junior, and the only Oregon high school runner to successfully double in the mile and 2 mile at the state meet. He set a national prep record for 2 miles in April of his senior year, at Corvallis. That June in Miami at the AAU Championships. He finished 4th (3rd American) in his first attempt at the 3 miles and qualified for a series of summer invitational track meets as a member of the US team.

To me, the characteristic that separates Pre from the rest of the field was his Pride. It was so keen and intense within him, that it was frightening. To be the best was his only goal. His drive to push harder in group workouts, or on his individual long run was his strength. Man imposes his own limitations. Limitation was not in Steve's frame of reference. He was continually extending the boundaries of his frontier.

My one concern as a coach working with Pre was that he understand that his accomplishments as a prep runner were just the beginning, a plateau from which to reach future greater heights. Don't peak out after high school or I will have disserved you was my plea. He assumed this responsibility in typical fashion. Steve was an unselfish individual. He shared his triumphs with me long after he left Coos Bay, and possibly more important his few failures. He kept in contact with me with letters from all parts of Europe, from South America, and most recently in September of 1974 a letter from England stating his plan to bring a group of Finnish Friends to Oregon and the Northwest for a series of meets. A plan which became a reality in the month of May. He never forgot the Pre People. We will never forget him. Love has many forms

1. The love a man has for his wife
2. The love parents have for a child
3. The love that exists between two people who have an ability to share in ideas and communicate with each other.

This is the love that I have for this man, I think that many of you share this feeling.

-Coach Mc Clure-

