

DRUMMOND'S DISPLAY THE ONLY HEADLINE FOR THE U.S.

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

The World Track and Field Championships are taking place in Paris, France, and sadly, the only headlines that the Americans are making is a sprinter prolonging the meet for nearly an hour, refusing to leave the track after being disqualified for a false start. The fact that American distance runners are nowhere to be found and the fact that the American male sprinters have caused the sport more embarrassment both come as no surprise. Jon Drummond, who subsequently announced his plan to withdraw from the remainder of the meet (as well as for the remainder of the 2003 season), was the guilty party. Drummond refused to leave the track after being disqualified from Sunday's 100-meter quarterfinals for a false start. The International Association of Athletics Federations was more than happy to oblige with Drummond's request, and like a bouncer with good cause to toss a drunken patron out into the streets, the IAAF went after Drummond "for behavior bringing the sport into disrepute". No arguments here. Drummond announcing he wouldn't compete in the remainder of the meet is the equivalent of the class nerd announcing he isn't going to take the head cheerleader to the senior prom. It wasn't going to happen anyway.

The only positive is that anyone who caught ESPN's recap was at least paying attention to Track and Field for a few minutes. The sight of Drummond, sprawled out onto the track refusing to move, received national media attention. Does anyone know who actually won the 100-meter race once it finally happened? This time, Drummond fell victim to a new rule regarding false starts, which now allows for only one false start per race and disqualifies a person who commits the second false start, regardless of who commits the first. Drummond admits to flinching but not to a false start. Meet officials saw it different. First, Jamaica's Dwight Thomas was called for a false start, then both Drummond and Jamaica's Asafa Powell were disqualified for leaving the blocks early in Round Two. The meet computer concurred. Drummond paints a different picture, explaining that he was disqualified from the race unfairly and was simply protested his disqualification. This isn't the first time that Drummond has made a public spectacle of himself in a Track and Field meet. At the 2000 Sydney Olympics, Drummond ran the first leg for the United States' winning 400-meter relay team, then proceeded to lead his teammates in a flexing and posing display during the national anthem. At least the anthem lasted for only a minute or two.

Nearly 30 minutes later, Drummond and his tantrum were still the center of the meet officials' attention. He threw a full-scale tantrum, set up camp on the track, and refused to budge. Jon Drummond rolled across the infield grass and sobbed. He splashed around in the water of the steeplechase pit. He ripped off his shirt, flexed for the crowd (as if his Olympic display wasn't embarrassing enough), and continued arguing with meet officials. He summoned the crowd for support, as if their reaction would reverse the decision (hint: it doesn't work in any other sport either). At the age of 34 and with the Olympic games less than a year away, Drummond's timing, both in and out of the starting blocks, was poor.

It will be a championship to forget for the American sprinters, as Maurice Greene, the reigning Olympic champion and a three-time world champion, injured his thigh and Tim Montgomery, the current world record holder (9.78 seconds), suffered from a poor start in the final and finished 5th. It was only the second time in 20 years that the United States failed to win a medal at the World Championships, and not the first time that the U.S. sprinters have embarrassed the sport and our country.

Racing Roundup

At least there was one bright spot for the U.S. team at the World Championships, at it was a local boy. Former Connecticut High School standout Jerome Young (Prince Tech) captured the gold medal in the 400 meters in impressive fashion. Young, a native of Jamaica, now resides and trains in Texas.....Monday's New Haven 20K Road Race will again serve as the United States Men's and Women's Championship for the distance as well as being the USATF Connecticut 20K Championship. Dan Browne, the defending New Haven champion, and Marla Runyan, America's current top distance runner, are both expected to compete.

This Month in History

August 8th, 1995 – At the World Track and Field Championships in Goteborg, Sweden, 5-foot-3, 119-pound Haile Gebrselassie of Ethiopia breaks away from a 5 man pack in the final 200 meters to win the 10,000 meter run in 27:12.95, the fastest time ever run in an World Championships or an Olympic race. Gebrselassie, already the world record holder for the distance (26:43.53), had to fend off Morocco's Khalid Skah (2nd in a national record 27:14.53) and Kenya's Paul Tergat (3rd in a personal best 27:14.70) to win his 2nd consecutive World Championship at the distance. Gebrselassie closed with a 56.0 final lap and 25.3 for the final 200 meters.

Don Sikorski writes a twice-monthly running column for the Norwich Bulletin. His "Coach's Corner" column can be accessed at www.moheganstriders.org. He can also be reached by e-mail at kdcsikorski@netzero.net.