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## Duck Season

2021

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OREGON DUCKS HOST THE 2021 NCAA OUTDOOR TRACK AND FIELD CHAMPIONSHIPS AT HAYWARD FIELD IN EUGENE, ORE., ON JUNE 9, 2021. (MADDIE KNIGHT/EMERALD)



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# A BRIEF HISTORY OF TRACKTOWN, USA

Through the years, Oregon Track has taken on a plethora of new looks. From Bill Hayward to Prefontaine, to Nike and beyond, the story of TrackTown is one for the ages.

BY CHARLES GEARING · TWITTER @GEARINGCHARLIE



Runners compete in the Women's 5000 meter Invitational. The Oregon Ducks host the Oregon Relays for track and field at the newly renovated Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., April 23, 2021. (Madi Mather/Emerald)

I remember seeing it for the first time. The chrome, spaceship-like tower dominating the campus skyline; the strong, cherry red wood beams bending over the field like the arm of a javelin thrower; the emerald green color of the turf in contrast with the sharp, clay red curves of the track.

It was the new Hayward Field in all of its glory. But I wondered: how did we get here?

Of course, one can't tell the tale of TrackTown without beginning with Bill Hayward.

After taking the reins of the program in 1904, "The Grand Old Man" elevated the Oregon Ducks Track and Field team into the national eye, producing four world record holders, six American record holders and nine Olympians throughout the course of his 44-year career.

"There were successful coaches before Hayward, but the fact that he was here for more than 40 years coaching the

team, there's certainly credence to be given to him and his influence," said Lauren Goss, a special collections librarian at the University of Oregon.

Goss was key in creating an exhibit about Oregon track and Hayward Field. She was also instrumental in the publication of "Hayward Field: Legends and Legacy," a book sold by Emerald Media Group, in 2020.

Hayward quickly became a highly sought after coach, receiving offers from programs all over the country.

"It was remarkable too, because he continued to get offers to go to other universities to coach, and he stayed here, which only adds to that legacy," Goss said.

Fifteen years into Hayward's career, in 1919, the storied original track was erected in his name. The university built it on a plot of land along Agate Street previously used as a cow pasture to produce milk for dormitory students.

The track was layered with gravel and sawdust to combat the soggy, paddock-like meadow below, and by 1921, featured a six-lane cinder track.

In the next three decades, the stadium underwent a vast facelift, raising the surrounding grand stands 20 feet over the field, replacing sawdust with turf and, most notably, adding its first electronic scoreboard, according to the UO Hayward Field history webpage.

It was built to house both track and football programs, and it would stay that way until 1966, when the football team played its final game in Hayward against Washington State.

Oregon track had facilities of its own starting in the '60s — a phenomenon that is considered rare even to this day.

“It definitely still is rare that a track team has its own dedicated stadium,” Goss said. “If you look at other schools in the Pac-12 conference, having a separate facility [is rare].”

In the 1960s, the “Golden Age” of Oregon track began. Under legendary head coach Bill Bowerman, the Ducks hosted — and won — two NCAA championships in '62 and '64, also winning the Pac-8 Conference title in '67.

Hosting the NAAs in 1962 was “definitely a turning point in the program,” Goss said. “Being able to host all of these other schools from around the country and have them come to Oregon, experience the Oregon fanbase.”

In '64, a blond, wiry-haired former Oregon track runner did a handshake deal with Bowerman, securing a \$500 investment in a company called Blue Star Sports, which specialized in importing athletic shoes from Japan.

The man was Phil Knight, and Blue Star Sports later became Nike — the multibillion-dollar company that would take over the world of sports and completely alter the UO campus, contributing to a new football stadium, a remodeled law school and library and the 2019 rebuild of Hayward Field.



Alexander Korczyński leads in the men's 3000-meter steeplechase. Oregon Ducks host the 2021 NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., on June 9, 2021. (Maddie Knight/Emerald)

But it was still only the beginning of the TrackTown story. In 1972, a kid from Coos Bay named Steve Prefontaine took to the starting line in the first Olympic Trials of Hayward Field's 53-year history. He became a legend, not just of Oregon, but of track in its entirety.

Prefontaine was one of three Ducks to advance to the Olympic Games that year in Munich. Through the course of his collegiate career, on the back of his bold, unique front-running strategy, the runner never lost a race longer than a mile, accruing seven individual NCAA titles in track and cross country.

"Being able to believe in that story of the young kid from the Oregon coast who is now going off to the Olympic Games and represent us and this program on the international stage is huge," Goss said.

Eugene hosted the trials once again in 1976, where it saw eight of its runners advance to the Olympic Games.

At the same time, Oregon women's track and field reached new heights under then head coach Tom Heinonen, who by the end of his 28-year tenure guided 14 national title winners, 10 Olympians and 128 all-Americans through the ranks of women's track.

Between 1980 and today, the Ducks saw scores of men's and women's track athletes advance to the Olympic Games, 13 of which medaled, claiming seven gold medals along the way.

Under coaches Vin Lananna, who started in 2006, and Robert Johnson, who took over for Lananna in 2012 and currently runs the team, Oregon added a combined additional 20 NCAA team championships.

One hundred and two years after its original construction, Hayward Field's legacy takes on a new look, with striking tributes to its past. Somewhere under its shiny, metallic, ultra-modern build still sits that magical dairy farm on which the legends of the past so tirelessly toiled toward glory.



*Isaiah Martin from Purdue University leaps over the bar in the men's high jump. Oregon Ducks host the 2021 NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., on June 9, 2021. (Maddie Knight/Emerald)*

# EUGENE PREPARES FOR THE GRANDEUR OF THE OLYMPIC TRIALS

A year after postponement, newly renovated Hayward Field is ready for the biggest event of the year.

BY CARLY EBISUYA · TWITTER @CARLYEBISUYA



*Runners compete during the men's 1500 meter race. The West Coast Classic takes place at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., on April 17, 2021. (Maddie Stellingwerf/ Emerald)*

The postponement of the 2020 summer Olympic Games in Tokyo was just one more disappointment in a year full of setbacks.

The newly imagined Hayward Field was set to host the 2020 U.S. Track and Field Olympic Trials, a 10-day run that was supposed to begin on June 18, 2020. The Tokyo Olympics then announced the Games would begin a year later, on July 23.

With the delayed Trials set to start in 2021, Hayward Field will finally open its doors to thousands of fans and the sport's best athletes for a chance to compete on the world's biggest stage.

TrackTown USA, the local organizing committee for numerous high-caliber track and field events, just like the rest of the world, had to suddenly shift all their plans back a year.

The news frustrated the volunteers and staff. The strategic planning and creating from the last couple years had to be reconfigured to introduce the new system for the postponement.

A small team of 11, TrackTown's staff rebounded quickly, realizing the postponement gave them even more time to fine tune their contingency plans during a pandemic.

Michael Reilly, the CEO of

TrackTown since 2018, held the vital position of competition director for the 2008 Olympic Trials in Eugene and is now heading one of the biggest events in the sport of track and field.

"Once we understood that the Olympic Games and Trials were a postponement, not a cancellation," Reilly said, "we really rebounded quite quickly to get focused on unwinding some of the plans we had in place, assess what it's going to take in this ever-changing landscape and start to build different operating plans for any number of situations."

The committee had time to





*Once we understood that the Olympic Games and Trials were a postponement, not a cancelation, we really rebounded quite quickly to get focused on unwinding some of the plans we had in place, assess what it's going to take in this ever-changing landscape and start to build different operating plans for any number of situations."*

**MICHAEL REILLY**  
CEO of TrackTown

recalibrate, working on tasks such as determining a final schedule, sponsorships, ticket sales and in-person fan regulations — all pieces of an intricate system that had to work smoothly for a multi-day event.

USA Track and Field, one of TrackTown's partners and the national governing body for the sport, has worked closely with TrackTown to ensure the safety of the athletes competing, Reilly said. They are implementing safety protocols and testing programs to make certain that the athletes heading to Eugene feel safe in the community.

The delayed Trials not only af-

ected the host organization, but also the local services and businesses that relied on the economic boost to keep their storefronts alive during a pandemic.

According to Travel Lane County, the 2016 Olympic Trials held in Eugene generated almost \$37 million in revenue, 40% of which was visitor spending, followed by hotels and hospitality at 23%. Even though this year will be at a reduced capacity, TrackTown expects the event will benefit the community and overall economic growth.

The Trials itself can, in turn, help jump start Lane County's recovery

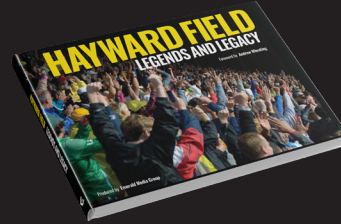
from the pandemic.

With the days counting down until the Trials this month, Reilly is looking forward to seeing all of the logistical planning and organizing pay off when fans and athletes step into Hayward Field.

"To see the Oregon athletes compete in the stadium that was built for them, even though there were very few spectators allowed, you can still feel that energy inside Hayward," Reilly said. "If that's just a taste of what's to come during the NCAA Championships and then the Olympic Trials, I can only imagine what the energy and buzz will feel like in that stadium."



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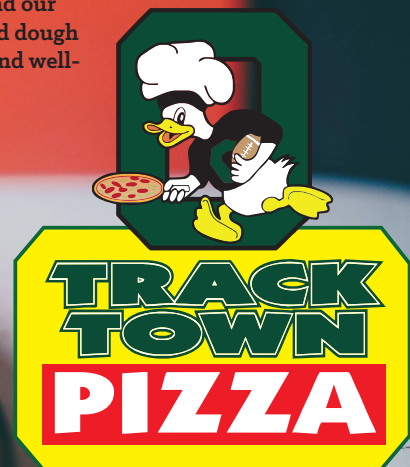
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# REMINISCING ON TRACK STARDOM

Runner Andrew Wheating became an NCAA champion at Oregon shortly after taking on track.

BY DYLAN CONWAY



*The newly renovated Hayward Field welcomes guests and players back for one of the first times since the project was completed. The West Coast Classic takes place at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., on April 17, 2021. (Maddie Stellingwerf/Emerald)*

In the men's 800-meter Olympic trials at Hayward Field in 2008, Oregon track star Andrew Wheating rounded the final turn in the middle of the pack. With 70 meters to go, he slipped into third place and, before he knew it, into second, crossing the finish line and qualifying for the Beijing Olympic games.

Wheating, hands on his head, was in awe. He had accomplished something he never thought possible.

"I just couldn't believe what just happened," Wheating said.

Many Olympic athletes commit their life to mastering their sport. For Wheating, qualifying for the Olympic games came only three years after he started seriously training for track.

After making a name for himself at the Olympic trials in 2008, Wheating took the NCAA Track and Field Championships by storm in the years follow-

ing. Specializing in the 800-meter, he became a five-time NCAA champion, setting three school records in the process. Wheating excelled at the pinnacle of college track and field and made his name known on the international scale. He holds memories from the old Hayward Field close to this day.

Running the 800 in the 2008 Olympic trials stands out to Wheating as one of his greatest memories

as a competitor at the old Hayward Field. Sweeping the 1500-meter race in the 2010 NCAA championships is another Hayward Field moment that stands out to him.

"I think the real reward there was being able to celebrate with two of my closest friends," Wheating said about the 2010 championships.

Wheating likes looking back at the old Hayward Field and the memories that



*The Oregon Ducks host the Oregon Relays for track and field at the newly renovated Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., April 23, 2021. (Madi Mather/Emerald)*

come with it. He compares it to having a phone for a while as it gets worn out in the process of using it.

“Hayward Field, of old, had all these stories, every nook and cranny has a story. At some point old wood rots and things break down and you have to upgrade, so we’ve upgraded.... to the iPhone 12 or whatever it is now,” Wheating said.

With the new Hayward Field, more moments and memories will be born,

starting with the 2021 NCAA championships.

“It doesn’t have these historic stories, doesn’t have the nooks and crannies that remind you of those old days, but it is a fresh canvas that you know 25 years from now we’ll look back on and be like, look at all these great performances that came out of this stadium,” said Wheating about the new Hayward Field.

For most track athletes,

the NCAA championships is the pinnacle of their college career. Wheating emphasized what a spectacle the NCAA championships are at Hayward Field.

“Oregon brings out their best attire and you feel like you’re at a formal event, which it is, but you can really feel the vibrancy of it as you’re doing warm ups around the track,” he said. “For a college kid, [the NCAA championships] is the Super Bowl of collegiate

running,” Wheating said.

Through his time in the championship spotlight, Wheating’s mindset stayed consistent. He focused only on winning, not personal bests or specific times, he said.

Wheating was the NCAA champion in the 800-meter in 2009 and 2010 as well as the 1500-meter champion in 2010. He became the first Division I man to win the 800 and 1500 in the same



year since Joaquim Cruz, also of Oregon, in 1984.

As one of the favorites at the championships, Wheatling was often put on a pedestal by running forums or social media, becoming a target for attention.

While in this spotlight, Wheatling felt significant pressure to achieve specific times and personal records. To combat the pressure, he focused purely on winning.

“It’s a 400-meter track no matter where you are so whatever your event is,

it’s that many laps, it’s no different, just go out and compete,” Wheatling said.

Wheatling also had experience as the underdog in the 2008 Olympic Trials prior to performing in the championships. He encourages athletes in the NCAA championships to embrace the underdog title.

“Being an underdog in ‘08, who knows, you could pop out and surprise people, like lean into being an underdog,” he said. “That’s a good feeling.”

“

**For a college kids, [the NCAA championships] is the Super Bowl of collegiate running.”**

**ASHTON WHEATING**

# OLD HAYWARD

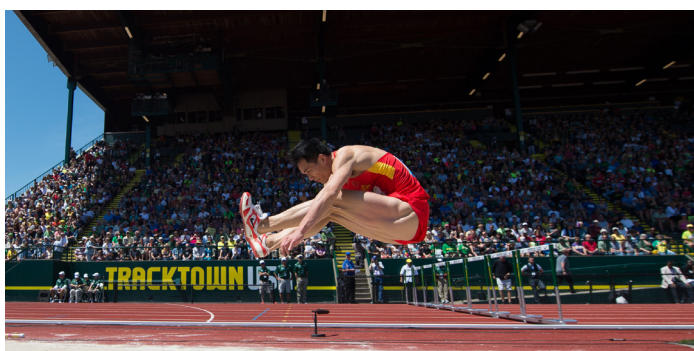


Hayward Field at the start of construction. (Emerald Archives)

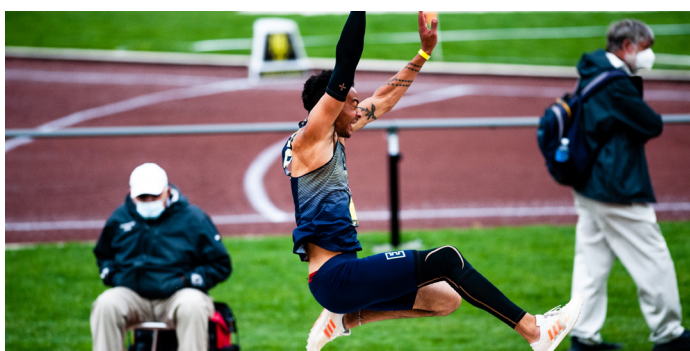
# NEW HAYWARD



Located across from the William Knight Law Center, Hayward Field is the University of Oregon Track and Field team's stadium. (DL Young/Emerald)



(Emerald Archives)



Alex Kosel of Eastern Oregon leaps into the air during the men's long jump. The University of Oregon hosts the Oregon Twilight for track and field at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., May 5, 2021. (Ian Enger/Emerald)



The NCAA Track and Field National Championships held at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., on June 9, 2017. (Emerald Archives)



Neema Kimtai takes the lead in the final lap of the Women's-1500 meter race. The Oregon Ducks host the Oregon Relays for track and field at the newly renovated Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., April 23, 2021. (Madi Mather/Emerald)



The NCAA Track and Field National Championships held at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., on June 9, 2017. (Emerald Archives)



Oregon Ducks host the 2021 NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., on June 9, 2021.



*Juvaughn Harrison from Louisiana State University competes in the Men's Long Jump. Oregon Ducks host the 2021 NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., on June 9, 2021. (Maddie Knight/Emerald)*

# SIGHTS AND SOUNDS: THE HAYWARD PREMIERE

After much anticipation, the new Hayward Field opened its doors on April 3.

BY SHANE HOFFMANN · **TWITTER** @SHANE\_HOFFMAN

*This story originally appeared on the SOJC Track Bureau's website on Apr. 3, just after the grand opening of the new Hayward Field.*

A security guard near the Agate Street entrance to Hayward Field glanced over his shoulder toward the outer ring of the stadium's deck. What he saw was a group of 20 or so fans perched over the metallic railing on Friday afternoon, peeking to get a glimpse of the first competition held in the new stadium.

"Hopefully I'm not stuck here all day," he said, swaying back and forth. "I'd love to go inside and check it out."

The fans yelled words of encouragement and cheered as they watched hammer throw on the video screen and other early field events. Those without tickets poked their heads through the trees lining Agate Street and grasped the guard fence in hopes of sneaking a view of the events.

The nation's premiere track and field stadium was finally open. And the students, who watched the evolution of the vast project on their campus, wanted the first crack at it.

"Is it open to fans?" a trio of students asked a staff member as they strolled by the north gate of Hayward

Field.

It was not; only a limited number of guests of Oregon athletes and news media were in attendance because of COVID-19 protocol. Signs reminded fans and onlookers of the COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines both inside and out of the stadium.

Still, a renewed sense of community encircled Hayward and the surrounding blocks. Runners jogged by, slowing their pace to take in the scene, their eyes hinting at smiles below their masks.

While some went about their business, skating, using the adjacent turf fields or traveling to and from their

dorms, many stood in awe at the sun-swept stadium. Students, families and community members snapped photos or captured videos.

The occasional driver tapped the brakes, slowing traffic, to catch a glimpse and a memory. A man driving a black pickup truck slowed as he passed the stadium and shot a video out the window on his phone.

Two students stood on a cement bench, craning their necks over the black metal gates in hopes of spotting

a brief moment of action. “It’s got like four levels of facilities down in there,” one student explained to his friends. “I can’t wait to get in there.”

The voice of announcer Paul Swangard emanated from Hayward and could be heard over a block away. With a sparsely filled stadium, the athletes themselves — specifically the Oregon track and field team — were responsible for much of the noise and excitement as the day progressed.

Past the large recreational field

where groups of students kicked soccer balls and competed in spike ball, the smaller fields were guarded by security guards in fluorescent vests. Athletes from neighboring schools, such as Portland State and fellow Pac-12 programs stretched, chatted with teammates and jogged laps around the smaller track.

As the sun set and the day’s final events came to a close, groups of onlookers stood outside the main gate peering in and taking photos.



*Eduardo Herrera (right) from Colorado places first for the Men’s 1500-meter Invitational. The Oregon Ducks host the Oregon Relays for track and field at the newly renovated Hayward Field in Eugene, Ore., April 23, 2021. (Madi Mather/Emerald)*