

FOSTER'S BIG HURDLE: HE BEATS HIS NEMESIS

Nehemiah, Who Says He's Only 65% in Shape,
Finishes Fourth; Sanford Wins the 100 in 10.02

By MAL FLORENCE, Times Staff Writer

UCLA's Greg Foster cleared a major hurdle—a mental hurdle—as he convincingly beat world record holder Renaldo Nehemiah in the UCLA-Pepsi Invitational at Drake Stadium Sunday.

Some people said Foster, who hadn't beaten Nehemiah since the NCAA meet in 1978, had been psyched out by Nehemiah.

Could be, but Foster says he is now concentrating on his own race—not those of Nehemiah and others. Foster is doing something right. Sunday he beat a world class field in 13.27, as Nehemiah, running only his second outdoor race after an ankle injury, finished a badly beaten fourth.

As usual, there were some outstanding performances before 11,749 in this meet that has replaced the old Coliseum Relays as the major outdoor invitational meet in Southern California.

USC's James Sanford, competing unattached, ran the 100 meters in 10.02, the fastest ever at sea level, and beat Harvey Gance, one of America's best sprinters, by a solid yard.

Steve Scott, America's premier miler, was equally impressive as he led wire-to-wire in the mile to win-by about 15 yards. His time was 3:53.1, fastest in the world this year.

Eamonn Coghlan of Ireland, the world indoor record holder in the mile, kicked in the final straightaway but couldn't overcome Scott's huge lead. Coghlan was second in 3:55.2, with Steve Lacy third in 3:55.7. Villanova's Don Paige, who said he wanted this race to test his condition, was out of it in seventh place (4:07.9).

Another outstanding performance was by USC's Billy Mullins, known by his teammates as the Trojan Horse, who overpowered a good field to win the 400 in 44.84, best in the world in 1980.

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But it was a painful afternoon for Evelyn Ashford, regarded as one of the best women sprinters in the world—if not the best. Ashford pulled up at the 70-meter mark of the 100 and fell to the track. She later said she felt a hamstring muscle snap in her right leg and it could be some time before she sprints again.

On the brighter side, it was a very satisfying win for Foster, who raised an arm in a victory signal as he went through the tape and then hugged his coach, Jim Bush.

Foster had a false start but got away quickly the second time and began to pull away at the second hurdle. He then poured it on even though he hit the fourth and fifth hurdles. Dedy Cooper was second in 13:43, with Rod Milburn, the 1972 Olympic champion, third in 13:54.

Nehemiah said last year that Foster, at 6-3 and 180, might be too big for the 110-meter hurdles and, a few days ago, implied that if the Bruin was ever to beat him, this meet would be the place because Nehemiah wasn't in top condition because of his ankle injury.

"I couldn't care less whether he was in shape," Foster said. "I ran

with a chipped bone in my ankle last year and never used it as an excuse. He is an excellent hurdler but he can't use it (the injury) as a crutch. No one told him that he had to come out here."

Foster crashed into hurdles and fell in two major races against Nehemiah last year—this meet, in which Nehemiah set his world record of 13.00, and the NCAA meet.

"The only time I didn't have good concentration last year was when I was in the same race with him (Nehemiah)," Foster said. "Today was a test of my concentration. I didn't see anybody—just the 10 hurdles and the tape."

Foster implied that he, not Nehemiah, is now the world's best hurdler. "He (Nehemiah) definitely has to get me now," Foster said.

Foster said he used to be bothered by what Nehemiah said about him, but no longer. "He can say things 20 million times now and it wouldn't bother me."

Nehemiah said he wasn't using his injury (torn ankle ligaments last January) as an excuse for losing, adding, "I never said Foster wasn't hurt last year when he would hit a hurdle . . . next time it will be a different story

. . . I won't degrade his (Foster's) character."

Nehemiah lost only one of 17 races in 1979 and was the NCAA, AAU, Pan-American Games and World Cup champion while breaking the listed world record four times.

"I was only in 65% shape today," he said. "I had a feeling I couldn't win. I was running flatfooted and couldn't push off my ankle. I didn't have any second or third gear (his time was a pedestrian 13.77).

"I'm no longer invincible as everyone said and I'm kind of glad. But I'll be the old Nehemiah by June."

Track Notes

UCLA'S **Ron Cornell** ran a fast time in fast company in the mile—finishing fourth with a personal best time of 3:57.7. He'll probably get some points for the Bruins in the 1,500 at the NCAA meet . . . Other good performances: Shot put—**Brian Oldfield**, 70-6¼; triple jump—**Willie Banks**, 56-2¼ (James Butts is the American record holder at 56-6¾); long jump—USC's **Kenny Hays**, 26-1¼ (wind aided); two mile—**Rudy Chapa**, 8:26.99; discus—**Mac Wilkins**, 220-2; women's 400—**Sherri Howard** of Kennedy High School, 51.8 . . . **Jim Hines**, the world's 100-meter record holder at 9.95, had the previous best time at sea level—10.03 . . . Banks said he had a foul jump of close to 58 feet .

