



Running in Lanes---

It Was All Over in Seconds

By Stephen G. Harding

You're set. There's no one to the left. No one to the right. It's just you, waiting for the sound of the gun. Without a baton in hand, there aren't many variables. Oh, you could false start, go out too fast, step on a line, or momentarily forget how to run the curve. But you won't; you're focused. Your form, your technique, they've become innate. Other than remembering to keep your head down for those first few steps, there's nothing else to think about. After all, it's all over in seconds.

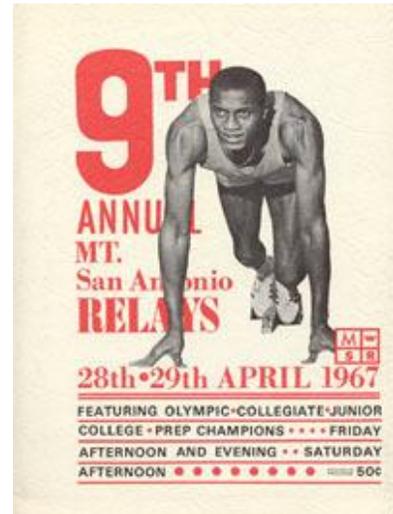
That's a sprinter's creed or at least a reasonable facsimile. Those that are fast, I mean REALLY FAST, possess an inherent ability to concentrate and tune everything out. It's borne out of inner confidence so often interpreted as swagger. Regardless, that recognizable arrogant gait was followed up by performance. They were, and still are, the elites, the one percent of the one percent.

But what about us? You know, the mere mortals? We, too, took sprinting seriously. After all, we were also members of an even larger cadre of would-be speedsters that came together in high school. We sported our varsity lettermen's jackets distinguishing us as athletes, not just students. I would suspect sometime in early pubescence, we each stepped onto a track to answer a single question: How fast am I? Whether motivated by curiosity or the insistence of some adult, we 6th, 7th, and 8th graders were about to be put to the test. Herded to the starting line, waiting our turn and a lane assignment, we stared down 100-yard's worth of striped hard dirt to where two of our classmates stood. Separated by the width of eight lanes, they stood face-to-face, pulling on what looked like nothing more than string. For a 10, 11, or 12-year-old, that fluttering thin white line was a mile away. On command, we found our marks, sort of got set, and bang slipped and slid down the track. The sounds of huffing, puffing, and the stomping of PF Flyers were over in, well, seconds. For some, it took a few. For the majority, it took a whole lot more.

From that moment, those that had the ability, and the will, would either become "Runners" or "Sprinters." One's speed would dictate which was which. It would be the tutelage of coaches that would sort out our very own personalized events. Those who continued to demonstrate some semblance of increasing velocity would direct their efforts to races of no more than one lap. These merchants of speed included our more coordinated brethren that were learning the art of hurdling. Yet gifted with considerably more stamina, the slower members were destined to round the full oval two, four, or even eight times. Some of those two lappers would get a glimpse of the mindsets of both worlds: One steeped in technique and force, the other on tactics and strategy. Ironically, there was some cross-over of thought. Mental strength was no less fundamental irrespective of distance. Elite runners shared this capacity with their sprinting counterparts. They were just as tough in mind and body for it was, they, that were the givers and takers of spiking, tripping, and flailing elbows. Running in lanes was safer. It was more civilized. It was a way to avoid the bullies of endurance that had minutes, not seconds, to think.

What's Fast? Who's Fast?

I have a vague recollection of being fast, a sprinter in my own right. Not in an elite sense, mind you, but fast. Yes, there is a difference. There was a time in my short-lived high school and college track career when I was relatively a fleet of foot, i.e., fast. To paraphrase the dictionary, I either moved or could move at high speed. But as I knew only too well, a few sprinters out there ran at higher velocities and still fewer yet, the elites, that seemed to have some sort of fifth gear. I had first-hand knowledge of these flyers. I recognized them as they flew by. One remembers those guys. What one forgets are those that are slower. Looking back, no, not literally; I passed a whole lot more than passed me. That made me fast, right? Well, that depends. Was I one of the fastest on the team, the league, the Division, the region? How about the State? As it turned out, pretty much.



Nonetheless, the fastest in the lower levels may be just average in another. The truth of it all depends on two sets of numbers: one's personal best time by event; and how those "Bests" compared to the postings of our peers in the greater collective. Whether we thought about it or not, we were all members of sprinting's collection of collectives. Our membership made us all relative to each other. It's these comparisons that determine what's fast and who's fast.

How Many Sprinting Fools are in These Collectives?

The National Prep Collective.--According to *Scholarship Stats.com*, the 2019 season saw 605,354 boys participating on varsity high school track teams nationwide. On average, approximately 32.5% of these young men were sprinters. That would put the national varsity prep speedster pool at somewhere around 197,000.

Then there's the State of California Prep Collective.--Also, in 2019, *The National Federation of State High School Associations* counted 55,335 athletes from 1,261 high schools participating in men's varsity high school track and field. Again, estimating 32.5% of these young men were sprinters puts a guesstimated 18,000 athletes that focused on the shorter distances.

Most importantly, at least for the more competitive of the lot, there is the National Collegiate Collective. At all levels of higher education athletics, 1,121 institutions participate in men's outdoor track and field, so says *Next College Student-Athlete*. Within all five college divisions, there are somewhere around 28,700 competitors with, using the same 32.5% multiplier, roughly 9,200 of them performing as members of a sprinting contingency.

For the elites and the majority of the fastest among us, college ranks were guaranteed. Yet, for whatever reasons, some never donned college togs and just called it a career. Don't tell me--- They didn't become long-distance club runners, did they? Maybe, since even the creme de la crème of the preps probably wasn't quite fast enough to make it to the professional leagues.

Regardless, it still didn't leave many scholarship opportunities for those that were merely fast. Without those grants in aid, sprinting becomes a fleeting hobby at best.

There is a Pecking Order—

- ***The Elites***
- ***The Faster than Fast***
- ***The Fast***
- ***The Faster Than the Rest***
- ***The Rest***

So, what is the difference? What defines ***Elites, Faster than Fast, Fast, Faster Than the Rest***, and even ***the Rest***? Unequivocally, it depends. Minimum standards include a posted personal best time at or below a stated maximum for a given track event. Thus, a *Minimum Standard* is based upon a maximum time. How's that for an oxymoron? Unfortunately, governing track and field entities and their self-appointed expert observers have varied, and even multiple, minimum, or was it, maximum standards? Since less is more, I'll stick with minimum.

Yet, for some odd reason, none are using my ***Elite, Faster than Fast, Fast, Faster Than the Rest*** and ***the Rest*** categories. Go figure for it is all based upon the opinions and demarcations of the



track and field gurus. The data I'm using is a compilation of numbers accumulated by the *CIF*, lesser-known as *the California Interscholastic Federation, Mile Split USA, Athletic NET, the U.S. Track & Field and Cross-Country*



Coaches Association, and, finally, a compendium of minimum qualifying times as reported by *Next College Student-Athlete*. To further complicate the matter, minimum standards differ by "Division" for both the *CIF* and the *NCAA*, also lesser-known as the *National Collegiate Athletic Association*. For the most part, members of the ***Elite, Fastest, and Fast*** categories are the most fixated on such things. After all, they have the best chance of competing at higher levels. For the last two groups, just meeting the slower minimums may have been goals unto themselves. Although most continued to compete, picking up an occasional third place here and there, I would suspect most knew that a career based on running the slowest leg on the relay was going to end sooner than later. It's mostly my group, the ***Fast*** group, that had the most significant level of anxiety. Some of us were walk-ons, hoping upon hoping with little or no guarantee.

Pecking the Orders

MileSplit

It's not just the battle for hierarchical dominance in the chicken coop. It's more than competing for the blue ribbon at the county fair. Without the agricultural euphemisms, it's more than the pecking orders that form between teammates or our adversaries around the league. It's true; the adrenaline rush comes from those straight-up tangible competitions. One's ranking on the school's and league's "Ladders" are the foci. Pride and records are made of these. For most, that's as far as it went. But the absolute ordering among the preps is on a statewide basis. That

composite, filtered at the divisional and regional levels. It's clear, definite, and quantifiable. From top to bottom, It's not about records. It's about time. Drawing lines between the **Elites**, the **Fastest**, the **Fast**, etc., makes things fuzzy. Focusing on a single event may provide some clarity.

From Pecking to Picking--The Men's 200 Meter Dash

In all deference to the historical attention paid to the "1", I pick the "2," the most accurate benchmark in sprinting. There I said it. From curve to straight, it's the most genuine test of technique and sustained speed. It draws competitors from every sprinting specialty. Most come from the 100-meter ranks closely followed by the nut jobs that blast around the entire track.

Given that coaches are always trying to find the perfect match between event and athlete, it's a good bet that every single sprinter, including hurdlers, has logged a time in the 200-meter dash. Regardless of specialty, it's where straight-up comparisons from the "1's" to the "4's" are made.

More importantly, it was my favorite and best event. It gave me time to overcome my ever-present lousy start. It was still my favorite even two years after graduation, but by then, I had also become a nut job. So, there you have it, my perfectly biased opinion.



Finally--Getting to Some Numbers

Enough already with the qualitative narrative. It's time for some numbers, those maximum-minimum qualifying standards. There is little ambiguity in the benchmarks, whether set by the CIF, the NCAA, or even USA Track and Field (USATF). However, they adjust annually and vary by Division or in the instance of the CIF, even by region. They are the minimum measurements required for entry to the upper echelons. Win your league event or meet the even stricter standards for finishing second or third, and you're off to the prelims. It's where the **Elites**, the **Faster than Fast**, the **Fast**, and a smattering of the **Faster Than the Rest** separate themselves from the **Rest**.

FROM THE CIF PRELIMINARIES TO THE STATE FINALS

Due to the pandemic, 2019 hosted the last complete season for high school track and field in California. Therefore, the best performances for the competitors of that year serve as the primary database for understanding "What's Fast" and "Who's Fast." Since the Southern Section of the CIF is the largest and most competitive of California's nine regions, its stated minimum standards and the speed required to make the State meet serves as the basis of this back-of-a-napkin analysis. To illustrate other varying standards, this examination of speed includes the gold and silver bars ascribed by Milesplit.com.

During the 2019 benchmark season, roughly 1,800 high school varsity sprinters ran at or under the 200m CIF minimum preliminary qualifying time of 23.84. That's 10% of the total estimated varsity sprinting core statewide. Even fewer than these speedsters made it to the prelims due to

the automatic qualifying that goes with winning a league final. A champion could be slower and in a less competitive league yet still move on to the first round. Someone that had run a faster time but didn't win his final, well, he was probably just out of luck. Regardless of who advances and who doesn't, a time of 23.84 serves as the great divide. Those that are slower are members of the **Rest**, the 90% of journeymen sprinters that didn't meet the minimum CIF qualifying time. The **Elites**, the **Faster than Fast**, the **Fast**, and the **Faster Than the Rest** contingencies fall into much narrower classifications.

In terms of subjective edification, the track and field talking heads agree that a competitive high school varsity 200m sprinter should be posting a time somewhere between the high 22s to the mid 23s. That makes the CIF's Division 1 Minimum Standard of 22.84 the perfect demarcation between the **Fast** and the **Faster Than the Rest**. According to Milesplit.com., some 1,336 California sprinters ran between 22.85 and the CIF Division minimum standard of 23.84 in 2019. That's nearly 75% of the 1,800 that were still in the mix. The combination of the **Elites**, the **Faster Than Fast**, and the **Fast** collectively comprise the remainder.

It's on to those that were **Fast**. It's this group where I would have fallen had I only gone back to the future with Michael J. Fox. I would suggest that those who were **Fast** ran the "2" between the Milesplit.com silver standard of 22.00 upwards to 22.84. This group of 404, plus the previous 1,336 categorized as **Faster Than the Rest**, represent 97% of the total contingent that equaled or bettered the CIF qualifying standard. That leaves the top 68 competitors. Even of these, only 41 equaled or bested the 21.81 marks required to make it to the State Track and Field Championship Meet.

It's now down to the **Faster than Fast** and the **Elites**. Where is this dividing line? In deference to the 21.6 clocking's ascribed as the gold standard by Milesplit.com, I'm going with a time of 21.49 as the differentiation between the **Faster than Fast** and the **Elites**. That's the minimum standard for qualifying for an NCAA Division I scholarship. Of the remaining 68, 50 competitors ran between 21.5 and 21.99. They are **Faster than Fast**. That leaves the top of the heap to just 18, the .1% that is genuinely the State of California's high school sprinting **Elites**.

Summarizing The What and The Who

Out of an estimated pack of some 18,000 varsity level sprinters statewide, there are:		
Competitors	Classified as:	With a Time of:
18	Elites	21.49 or less
50	Faster than Fast	21.50--21.99
404	Fast	22.00--22.84
1,336	Faster Than the Rest	22.85--23.84
16,192	The Rest	23.85+

These are my suggested demarcations. No matter, there will always be the army of armchair experts that will argue as to where these lines should be drawn. My response to them: Write your own essay.

College Bound

Including the **Faster Than the Rest** club, about 90% met the minimum standard of 23.72 required to compete at the lower levels of the college ranks. Almost all had to run a lot faster to make any team, but it was still an accomplishment to meet the minimum standard. Since half of the veteran collegiate track and field membership continues to the following season, there is little space for incoming padawans. Of those, no more than 37% could expect to receive even a partial scholarship. Coaches in Division 1 and 2 of the NCAA and their counterparts in the community college and National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) systems hold the power of the purse. A Division 1 signature sprinter running in at least three events, one being a relay, would have the best opportunity for a complete financial ride. Since the adoption of Title IX and its purpose to facilitate athletic equity, even the best of the best would find it challenging to land a full-ride stipend. Regardless, the primary motivations of many coaches, especially in Division 1 are titles, trophies, and conference championships. The fit between runner and institutional expectations will vary according to need and the depth of the incoming class.

To spread the wealth, especially between men’s and women’s sports, each institution at the two highest levels of the NCAA is limited to 12.6 scholarships. Irrespective of the thought process behind the distribution of financial aid, there is a veiled schism between Division I and the so-called lower ranks of university-level athletics. Summed up: **“The Athlete/Student is reflective of Division 1. The Student/Athlete populates the Rest.”** That does not mean that athletes in Division 1 are not held to the same academic rigors. But for many, the primary motivation is not academic. It’s to perfect athletic prowess, move to the top of their event, earn professional compensation, or even a trip to the Olympics. Although not impossible from Division 2 on down, it’s just less likely. Irrespective of the level of competition, financial support is foundational for success. Since neither the “Ivies” nor the schools of Division 3 offer athletic scholarships, they are more likely to attract the **Student/Athlete**. Regardless of Division, they are just as competitive in spirit as the **Athlete/Student**.

Minimum Qualifying Performance Standards				
	Division 1	Division 2	Division 3	Division 4
CIF S/S	22.84	23.14	23.44	23.84
Minimum Qualifying Performance Standards for Scholarship Consideration				
	Division 1	Division 2	Division 3	NAIA
NCAA/NAIA	21.49	22.72	23.72	23.05

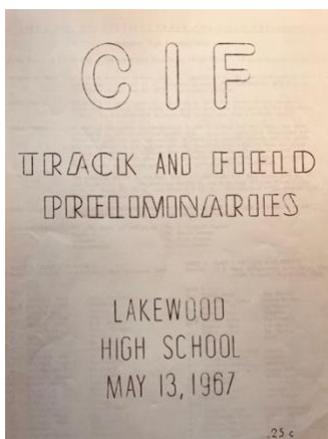
Scholarship Stats.com estimates that only one out of 18, or 5.6% of high school varsity track and field athletes, move up to the college level. Only one out of 60, or less than 1.7%, found their names included on Division 1 rosters. Most likely, the slots at the top two Divisions were taken by the **Elites**, the **Faster Than Fast**, and only a sliver from the **Fast**. The slowest of the **Fast** and the fastest of the **Faster Than the Rest** probably competed for the balance of openings in Division 2, Division 3, the NAIA, or the community college level. Given that a student's motivation and academic credentials vary, it's probably a safe assumption that the filling of slots did not fit so neatly within these divisional confines. Yet, whether a member of the 5.6% or the 1.7%, at least 1,000 California prep speedsters made it somewhere beyond high school. In the spirit of King Leonidas, 300 went on to defend themselves in Division 1. That's 300 Spartans, uh, sprinters, out of 18,000.

Making It to the NCAA Finals and Beyond

And you thought it was hard just getting into the college ranks. Try making it to the back end, the conference finals, NCAA regionals, or even the Olympic time trials. Only the swiftest of the swift continue. Each preliminary heat culls the herd. For the majority, that's where it ends. From the prelims to the finals, each college Division replicates the same process.

Remember the Division 1 minimum scholarship qualifying standard? That would be a time of 21.49. All 96 of the 2019 preliminary qualifiers clocked a time of 20.95 or better, with the fastest posting of 19.76. The USATF Olympic time trial qualifying standard for that same year was 20.24. Only six of these superhumans met that standard. They were joined by just one of their brethren from Division 2. They are the **Elite** of the **Collegiate Elites**. As far as the Olympic time trials are concerned, a competitor, collegiate or not, must meet the minimum standard and finish in the top three of their events. Even the **Elite** of the **Elites** must be at their best when it counts the most. To get to this level, one runs, or sprints, along a road less traveled.

An Epilogue for My Own Amusement



It's been over 50 years when an injury put to bed my short-lived six-year career running in lanes. To my chagrin, the first three were less than memorable. (Note to self—burn, don't keep, every old record). Yet, at the ripe old age of 17, I metaphorically became a card-carrying member of the association of the **Fast**. Neglecting to collect my \$200.00, I sped past "Go," racing ahead of my teammates that could be identified as either **Faster than the Rest** or, primarily, the **Rest**. Ending my high school senior year with two league records, an MVP trophy, and advancing to the CIF prelims in both of my events was not even on my radar the year before. Lack of confidence always seemed to overshadow my natural ability. It also didn't help that I was somewhat injury prone. When it came to meet day, I was easy to pick out of the crowd.

Shaved and taped from just behind my toes to the top of my weak ankles, I looked like the human version of a quarter horse. There was no doubt that I would be running on the balls of my feet. On the surface, I was in the top 10% of all high school sprinters in the State. As it turned out, make that the top 1%. I'll explain.

If I really were going back in time, namely to 2019, how would my high school 200m time hold up 52 years after the fact? To find the answer to the question of the century, you'll need to sit down, relax, maybe enjoy your favorite libation while you absorb my variable-laden rationale. Back then, it was yards not meters, thanks to those British Imperialists. Consequently, we ran 220 yards versus 200 meters. Prior to 1967, the race was run on straightaways, a modernized version of the ancient Olympic tradition of the Stadion. That tradition ended at the end of my senior year.

Still, I was sporting my brand-new factory direct Adidas "Tokyo's," when I clocked my fastest 220 time of 21.7. Of course, it was on the straight. By 1968, the remnants of the Stadion were universally put to rest. From thereon, half of a 220-yard dash would be run on the curve of the 440-yard/400-meter oval. Times like mine would forever be notated with an asterisk. Lucky me, it ended up with four asterisks. For an accurate comparison between then and now, current acceptable CIF and universal timing standards must be applied to deal with four variables:



- (1) Converting yards to meters
- (2) Speed on a straight versus a curve
- (3) Measuring time in tenths versus hundreds or even thousands of a second
- (4) Hand versus Fully Automatic Timing

Aye, yi, yi. All I did was run. I didn't decide on the straight or curve, the method of timing, or whether adherence to the Imperial standard should stand or not. It was an age where very few schools used anything but a tenth of a second handheld watch with coaches waiting to hear the gun. At least in my experience, they did know to wait for the sound and not watch for the smoke. The handheld rock-throwing set focuses on egregious timing errors committed by an unnamed senile senior citizen whereby a second-place finisher posts a faster time than the winner. Examples like this are nonsense. They are often repeated by some underage armchair self-appointed sports aficionado writing on his own blog or the East of Nowhere Gazette. Sorry, I'll stop hyperventilating.

With most, but not all, of my rant behind, there is merit to where the professional associations have landed on this subject. It's a fact, 220 yards is longer than 200 meters. Running on a curve is slower than on a straight. Timing accuracy must be broken down at least to the hundredth of a second, and indeed, Fully Automatic Timing is more accurate by the simple fact of eliminating human error. Having said that, what does that do to my old time of 21.7. As you can imagine, the conversion process pushes me out of the **Faster than The Fast** Category into the **Fast**. Here's how it works:

- (1) To compensate for handheld times not measured in hundreds and thousands, postings must be rounded up to the nearest tenth of a second. My 21.7 is now 21.8.
- (2) Running a curve adds .4 seconds to a straightaway time. My rounded-up time of 21.8 now goes up to 22.2.

- (3) Moving to a Fully Automatic Timing corrects the recognized hand-held human error of .24 seconds. My god, I'm now up to 22.44 seconds, but at least it's for a 220, not a 200.
- (4) Utilizing the yards to meter time conversion formula used by Milesplit.com, that 22.44 is reduced to 22.31 compensating for the shorter distance.

So that's what I must go with, a 22.31 for the 200-meter dash. Now that's disappointing, but it is what it is. On the brighter side, of the fifteen or so 220s I ran in 1967, only two would be over 23.00 seconds. I think I can safely categorize myself as **Fast**. If I were to be dropped into the flock of 2019 sprinters, where would I rank in the State of California? Drum roll, please-I would tie for 174th place. Out of a field of over 18,000, that still would put me in the top 1% of all Varsity high school sprinters statewide. Not bad, pops. Probably like 1967; that would get me into the second round of the CIF prelims. After all, 173 of my futuristic counterparts were faster. Even still, only 41 of them were fast enough to get to the State meet. Nine would be left standing for the final race itself.

On to the second part of my rant. It was the dark ages of track and field facilities but not the darkest. At least sprinters didn't carry trowels to dig holes in place of starting blocks. Yet, tracks were still either composed of cinder or rock-hard dirt with potholes. Sprinter spikes were an inch long that at times still didn't sink into some of the poorer maintain surfaces. Starting blocks were as primitive as they come, with the blocks themselves being locked into place with a flywheel



that often didn't even turn. One's "Push-Off" block was notorious for slipping. As for sprinter training in and of itself, weights were avoided. If we bulked up, we slowed up. After four years of high school track, I couldn't have even told you where the weight room was. By today's standards, I looked like a fifteen-year-old miler even when I was a senior. As an aside, my freshman and sophomore years saw both the high jump and pole vault pits still full of sawdust. Pitchforks were as common as metal poles. Even with these obstacles, our generation certainly did not get any credit from those same armchair experts chirping about how hand timing could not be

trusted. After all, they had no idea what it was like to run with burning lungs during smog alerts. In the end, it does give credence to at least one age-old adage: Comparisons are odious at best.

One Final Rationalization and Beyond

During the summer of '67, I split my spare time between going to rock concerts and running. When I wasn't working, hanging on "The Strip," or coming back from a music festival, I ran in "All-Comers" meets at Long Beach State or Mt. SAC. How's that for a juxtaposition lifestyle? I had a hard time avoiding the distractions of the Summer of Love. I was too self-absorbed, worrying about Vietnam, college, and how to pay for it. That thinking meant focusing on a scholarship by being faster. I was still seventeen and in no man's land, that period just after high school but before college. Now without a coach, I got my AAU card and continued to compete. My first time running on a synthetic surface was at Long Beach. I can't remember if it was "Tartan" or not. What a difference. In my first race, I ran a 21.9, my fastest time ever on the curve. Even then, I was thoroughly trounced by one of the **Elites**, this guy named Wayne Collett. It was hand-timed but by college coaches in recruitment mode. Timing accuracy was a priority. Still, for the sake of comparison, the conversion calculation must be applied. Zip, Zap, Zop, my 200-meter time was

now down to 22.11. If high school graduation had been extended for just another month, I would have tied for 95th in the 2019 statewide rankings. I would have been close but with no cigar. I was still shy of being ***Faster Than Fast***.

As it turned out, I did go on to run in the college ranks and was blessed with a coaching staff versed in sprinting. For some odd reason, I now could find the weight room. Although I continued to get faster, 21.6 (21.81) in '68 and 21.4 (21.61) in '69, those marks were never going to get me to a conference final let alone an invitation to the NCAAs. I was now the one running the second or third leg on the relay. Nonetheless, it all came to an end when I never seemed to recover from a torn hamstring. That's a pain I'll never forget. Before the injury, the head coach told me that you're fast but not fast enough to be a top competitor in the 2 or the 4. Your event is the 8, start training. By the time I came to that realization, it was too late.

In the End-It was All Over in Seconds



I hadn't yet seen my 20th birthday, but it was over. In terms of a race and even a career, it was just a matter of seconds. Years later, I found myself taking my son to track meets. We made it a regular event to go to the UCLA/USC dual meet or even up to Hayward Field for the Pac 12 Championships. Occasionally, we'd run into some of my old competitors from those CIF days of yesteryear. My son thought it was cool how the four or five of us would BS and reminisce about the glory days. Sitting in the stands, one of them turned around and said to me: "Harding—the older you get, the faster you were." He didn't know I kept records.

It was those random encounters that made me realize how important those days really were. That rush of catching a competitor at the line while running the anchor leg of a relay. Those sensations were well buried in the recesses of memory, a part of my DNA. I had long since forgotten the deep sense of loss when it all so abruptly came to an end. Whether I was unaware or just plain clueless, track HAD been my purpose, my personal reflection of an ***Athlete/Student***.

Postscript

There is an evaluative clarity to running in lanes. External intrusions affecting performance are minimal. Lacking the transference of a baton, it is not dependent upon the notion of team. Other than the view of a coach, it is not about the subjective opinion of others. It is not affected by the nuances of a slow pace, being boxed in, tripped, or knocked off the track. With few exceptions, there are no barricades to clear, no poles to plant, no steps to count. Putting, throwing, and jumping both horizontally and vertically come close, but those experiences are still not the same. For it is the lanes themselves that separate the athlete from everything else. It's where performance is measured in the purest sense, the clock being the only judge.

Take it from a guy that back in the day, was ***Fast***.