



(AP Wirephoto)

The route to a new world record

Two men broke the world's record for the 200-meters Thursday at South Lake Tahoe with John Carlos, third from left, leading the assault with a time of 19.7. He was followed by Tommie Smith, far right, and Stanford's Larry Questad, fourth from left.

New records in doubt

By JOE SARGIS

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. (UPI)—America's track and field stars are rewriting the record book at high altitude, but that old bugaboo—officialdom—is lurking in the background ready to cheat them out of their hard-earned rewards.

Bob Seagren, the 21-year-old jumping jack from Pomona, Calif., set a world record of 17 feet, 9 inches Thursday in the pole vault at the U.S. Olympic track and field trials. John Carlos, an angular, happy-go-lucky runner off the sidewalks of New York, matched it with a spectacular 19.7 second world record-setting performance in the 200-meter dash.

As fantastic as those records may sound, though, both Seagren and Carlos may get cheated out of them, Carlos more than Seagren.

After Seagren, a senior this fall at the University of Southern California, had cleared the pole vault bar, two different officials scaled a ladder and reported it was a 17-9 effort.

METRIC SCALE

However, when the officials tried to justify 17-9 on the metric scale, they couldn't do

it. So, first they announced the height at 17-8 3-4, which figures out to 5.41 on the metric scale, then thought better of it, and said the mark stands at 17-9.

A little later, after a meeting of the men's Olympic Rules Committee, it was decided to turn the matter over to the International Amateur Athletic Federation, a body composed of members from nations who use the metric system rather than feet and inches. Don't bet Seagren doesn't lose a quarter inch by the time that one is decided.

Carlos is in deeper with the officials.

It seems he used running shoes which may not be approved by the IAAF. If not, goodbye record, and also Tommie Smith's 19.9 performance for a second place finish.

The shoe in question has 68 needle like spikes across the sole. An IAAF rule says no shoe should have more than six, but the rule is ambiguous in that it doesn't spell out what is meant by a spike. The shoes Carlos and Smith used, in accordance with IAAF rules, offer no

advantage except that some athletes prefer them to others for comfort reasons.

That one, too, goes to the IAAF to be muddled over.

Carlos, happy as he could be with his record—and victory over Smith—said he couldn't care less about the shoes.

SET RECORD

"What do I care about the shoes," said the man who won the 100 dash at the Little Olympics a year ago. "I set the record, not the shoes, and the way I was juiced up I could have done it in my bare feet. Man, I was flying, and don't forget this is the first time I ever beat Smith."

Smith, who has had stomach problems since coming to 7,377-foot high Echo Summit, held the recognized record at 20 seconds flat, set a year ago at San Jose, Calif. He also broke his own mark with his 19.9 performance. And Larry Questad, a man who had never done better than 20.5 in the past, tied the Smith mark of 20 flat to gain the third Olympic berth in the 200.

It was a race which Payton Jordan, Olympic track and field team coach, called the greatest

of all time.

That's no exaggeration.

Consider these facts to back Jordan's argument. Jerry Bright and Tom Randolph finished fourth and fifth, respectively, in 20.1, and Bill Bruckel was sixth in 20.3.

Carlos, who is 23, stands 6-4 and weighs 187 pounds, still doesn't believe it.

While running a semifinal heat earlier in the day, Carlos said he let up a little at the end and still managed to do 20.3.

"I really wasn't interested in setting a world record," he said, "but after that earlier race I thought I'd let it out all the way and see what happened."

SURPRISES

He did, too, as he beat Smith by about three yards with Questad only a stride back. Questad's finish really surprised Carlos.

"Wasn't that something?" he asked. "I couldn't believe it when he brushed alongside me. If we (Smith, Carlos and Questad) can stay healthy between now and the Olympics, I see no reason why we can't sweep.