

Green second, but still comes up a winner

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BERKELEY — Many the high school track and field standout with world-class marks has fallen apart under the pressure of moving up to world-class competition. Yet if anyone thought such might be the case with Cubberley High's Bill Green, such thinking should perish forever.

Saturday, Green took on some of the best 400-meter runners in the world in the Brooks Invitational on Cal-Berkeley's Edwards Field track. He didn't win, but...

At the finish, Green trailed only one man, former Arizona State runner Tony Darden, who was timed in 45.95 on the surprisingly slow Tartan surface. Green's mark was 46.46, a fine time for a prep runner and second for Green only to his 46.34 in the rarefied atmosphere of Mexico City in an international junior meet last summer.

But the time isn't important. Green should have, and could have, run faster Saturday. It's possible he might even have won had he been more experienced.

What is important are the names of the men who trailed him in the race. Willie Smith, last year's No. 1-ranked 400 man in the United States was seventh, possibly out of shape, although most of those running Saturday should have been near their peaks with the national AAU meet coming up this week in Walnut.

Maurice Peoples, No. 6 on the 1978 U.S. list, is in shape and he wound up third; Herman Frazier, No. 10 last year, also is in shape, and he was fourth. The same for fifth-placer Evis Jennings, another high-ranking jumper last year.

The significance of beating such athletes did not go unnoticed by Green, who will be taking on an even bigger task this week when he makes the trip to Walnut, hoping for the success that will produce not just a placing, but a berth on a touring national team this summer.

As he said afterward, "It tells you what level you're at."

"I might have gone out the first 200 too slow," he acknowledged. Indeed, while not last, he was well back at the halfway point. "I'm not



Franklin Jacobs sails over 7-2 to win the high jump at Saturday's Meet of Champions.

Times Tribune Photo by Jim Lanahan

used to people going out that fast."

As it was, Green apparently didn't realize his true situation until well into the final 200 meters, when he suddenly turned it on, overcoming four runners and closing the gap on Darden.

"I was really strong at the end. I had too much left," he admitted. "I probably should have started faster, or at least begun my kick earlier."

How did the pressure of going against such a class field compare with that he felt going into his ill-fated 440 in the California State High School Championships last week, a race in which he broke the national mark, only to be disqualified for stepping too often on the line separating his lane from the lane inside him?

"It was a different kind of pressure," the USC-bound youngster said. "At the state meet, it was pressure from how others expected me to perform. Today, it was only from how I was expecting myself to perform."

It's possible the significance of Green's performance was lost on most of those in the crowd of 16,250

who were understandably caught up more in the showings of the "name" athletes.

They seemed particularly appreciative of the performances of four men — local product James Robinson, who ran the fastest 800 meters in the world this year, 1:45.52; headliner Renaldo Nehemiah, whose effortless 13.41 for the 110-meter high hurdles best demonstrated the slowness of the track; former world record holder John Powell, who upset world discus leader. Knute Hjeltnes with the best throw of his comeback campaign, 219-4, and South Africa's Sydney Maree, who ran away from Kenya's fabled Henry Rono on the last lap to win the 3,000 in 7:43.0, a national mark for Maree.

There were some disappointments, too. World mile king John Walker didn't run, his rehabilitation program following foot surgery not quite completed. Greg Foster, Nehemiah's only real competition, passed up the meet with a leg injury he didn't wish to aggravate before the AAU meet.

There were some great competitive events, the 800 as good as any with Villanova's NCAA double-

winner (800 and 1500) Don Paige holding a lead coming off the first turn, only to lose by 2/100ths of a second at the tape as it came down to a case, observed Paige, "of what was tied up the most." Paige's 1:45.91 was a lifetime best. Steve Scott dropping down from the mile, was impressive at 1:45.91.

Was Robinson, a former Cal athlete who has never lost a race at Berkeley, at his best in turning what was the No. 2 clogging of his career (he led the U.S. and won fourth in the world last year at 1:45.47)?

"I certainly hope not," Robinson said. "I don't think that time is good enough for the World Cup (in Montreal in late August)."

It was a good day for 800 runner the women's race going to Sunvale product Francie Larrieu, who fought off Julie Brown, MaDecker and Jan Merrill coming the final turn to win in 2:03.17.

Edwin Moses, the Olympic 400-meter champ and world record holder, had little trouble cruising a 48.98 win, but the most impressive performance in that race came from San Jose City College sophomore Andre Phillips, who was second in 49.94.