



The Mile and the NCAA

The Mile & America

There is no doubt that the Mile is one of the most important events in the U.S. for the media and the general public because of its deep embedment and history in our culture. We began Bring Back the Mile with the insight that the 1500m is only covered in the U.S. during national championships and especially during the Olympics, yet the Mile and the sub-4 minute Mile continues to appear in articles across the country throughout any given year and for all levels of competition (high school, collegiate and professional). In short, Americans “get” the Mile not the 1500.

Why the Mile and the NCAA?

- ★ The Mile has been a 1500 meter qualifier for recent U.S. Olympic Trials and USA Outdoor Championships, both genders.
- ★ The Mile, for the first time, became an official 1500m qualifier for the 2015 IAAF World Championships (outdoors), and it is a USATF and IAAF official record distance.
- ★ The return of the Mile for the men and first women’s NCAA Outdoor Championships Mile race would add to the media and sport’s interest and coverage: The last outdoor NCAA Mile champion was Eamonn Coghlan (Villanova), 4:00.06, in 1975, while the NCAA has not contested a women’s outdoor Mile championship race.
- ★ Professionally, prize money available to athletes for *just* the Mile has increased from under \$139,000 in 2012 to over \$364,000 in 2015 or 2.6 x more money available for Milers since BBTM’s launch. This is one of the unique events in the sport professionally outside distance road running (5K - Marathon) that continues to grow in prize money, sponsorship dollars and “buzz”.
- ★ The Mile continues to be run at numerous major international meets, including 4 IAAF Diamond League meetings. The same is true at many major High School invitationals/races such as Arcadia and adidas Grand Prix.
- ★ Since 2012 there have been 88 U.S. athletes that have broken 4 minutes in the Mile for the first time (average of 22 a year) and 53 or 60% of those were collegiate athletes. Many of these first-timers received unique media sub-4 mentions in the local newspaper and/or collegiate team website, while the equivalent 1500m time (3:42) would not garner any attention or mention unless a school record.

The 1500m & the NCAA

- Since 2010, no woman has hit any IAAF World Championship or Olympic standard in NCAA competition.
- Since 2010, only three men have hit IAAF World Championship or Olympic standards in NCAA competition.

The Mile is the key to promoting the sport at ALL levels: no other event gets such regular media and general public interest and “buzz” and has a still resonating and understood “Roger Bannister moment” such as clocking sub-4 minutes. It is time for the NCAA coaches to support bringing back the Mile for the outdoor NCAA Championships like the indoor Championships. This would be good for the sport and well-received in the media (applauded and widely covered) and throughout the sport and beyond.

In short, as the above shows, there is no good / solid reason for the NCAA to keep the 1500 over the Mile at its outdoor Championships. Vote YES on the proposal to Bring Back the Mile!



Proposal: Change 1500 Meters in Outdoor Track & Field to the Mile.

Implementation: Immediately

Eric Houle Southern Utah University

Rationale:

Track & Field has experienced a decline in interest with major TV markets, which has and will continue to affect interest from potential athletes, spectators and athletic administration. How athletic administration determines the value of this sport, beyond just the cost effectiveness it brings to an institution, is ultimately the motivation for this proposal. Interest in Track & Field is and has been on the decline for the last 30 years. Bringing the Mile back to Outdoor Track & Field would be one step toward changing this decline of coverage, interest and support.

All sports try to relate to their audience and/or modify the rules of the game to keep interest in that particular sport. This proposal deals directly with the audience. Everyone has run a Mile, for time, at some point in their life. To allow the audience to experience our top collegiate men and women running that same Mile will not only increase interest in the sport, but it will also inspire the next generation of athletes, audience and TV marketers. In addition, the IAAF agrees with the need to run the Mile. They now allow qualifying for its World Championships using the Mile (outdoors and indoors).

USTFCCCA Chief Executive Officer, Sam Seemes (Bring Back the Mile April 2015 interview)

“But there was nothing more talked about in Fayetteville during those two days of the national championships than the fact that nine people ran under 4 minutes in the semifinal at a collegiate championship to make the final of the Mile. So I think there is some substance to that alone. There wasn’t anyone in that building who didn’t understand what just went after those two semifinals.”

Coach Eric Houle

“We have witnessed a decline in interest in Track & Field over the last 30 to 40 years. With today’s collegiate landscape so dynamic, we need be aggressive to halt this decline to prevent the possible demise of our sport. My hope is that, at this year’s convention, we begin to make small changes that could yield big results to slow down, stop and eventually reverse this decline.”

“All sports adapt to their audience by modifying the rules to make changes to keep interest in their sport, and make it more TV friendly. It is time to modify aspects of our sport. The IAAF recognizes the importance of the Mile and has since modified its rules to accommodate this important event. How athletic administrators determine the value of this sport, beyond just the cost effectiveness it brings to an institution, is also a motivating factor for this proposal. We all can agree that interest in track & field is and has been on the decline. Bringing the Mile back to outdoor track & field can be one step to change this decline. The proposal to “Bring Back the Mile” deals directly with the audience and ultimately university support. Everyone has run a Mile, for time, at some point in his or her life. To allow the audience to experience our top collegiate men and women running that same Mile will not only increase interest in the sport, but it will also inspire the next generation of athletes, university administrators, audience and TV marketers.”