

The 2021 U.S. Olympic Trials represent both a culmination of almost 40 years of track and field preeminence for Eugene and the beginning of a yearlong period where Eugene becomes again the center of the track and field world, according to Michael Reilly, the Chief Executive Officer of Tracktown



USA, the organizer of the 2021 Olympic Trials. “We started in 1972, with no bidding process, no planning,” he said, “just Bill Bowerman throwing out an idea” which he pitched first to local officials and then to the U.S. Olympic committee. That spirit, which mounted the trials with a budget of about \$84,000 enabled the organizers to mount a much more comprehensive effort in 2008, which led to a series of trials in Eugene and finally now, to the 2021 trials, which are budgeted at \$10 million.

This year’s trials, postponed from 2020 because of the pandemic, have had some rocky moments, because of the confusion and uncertainty surrounding how to manage a huge event in the middle of a pandemic. As recently as two weeks before they began, there was concern that only about 600 visitors could be accommodated in the new Hayward field. It was only in the week before that Lane County reached the vaccination threshold which would permit the audience to expand to 8,000, and only through vigorous efforts to persuade Governor Brown not to require the one week waiting period before shifting status that allowed the County to move to lower risk in time to tell ticket holders, who had already been warned they might not be admitted, to now plan to attend.

But, like the pitches that pervade some television – “wait, there’s more.” On July 12, less than a month after the trials conclude, tickets will go on sale for the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Prefontaine Classic, one of the sport’s premier events, which will be held at Hayward Field on August 20 and 21. Information on the Prefontaine can be found at the [Prefontaine website](#). Those tickets will go on sale on the University of Oregon Athletic Department site [www.goducks.com](http://www.goducks.com). And yet even more – on July 15-24, 2022, Hayward Field will be the site of the World Athletic Championships, the first time this international event has ever been held in the United States. More information on that event can be found at the [WCH Oregon 22](#) website.

New to the Olympic trials this year is the first event to be held in the City of Springfield. The 20-kilometer race walk was scheduled for Saturday June 26 in downtown Springfield.

Mr. Reilly reported that the Olympic Trials will bring about 1100 athletes and another 1000 support personnel to Eugene and Springfield, in addition to any visitors here to attend the Trials. He expressed confidence that the Olympics will proceed as scheduled in Tokyo in July but did say the Prefontaine organizers are carefully watching the impact travel restrictions may have on the ability of Olympic participants to travel to Eugene for the Prefontaine. He said requirements and restrictions are constantly changing.