

When Ducks Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

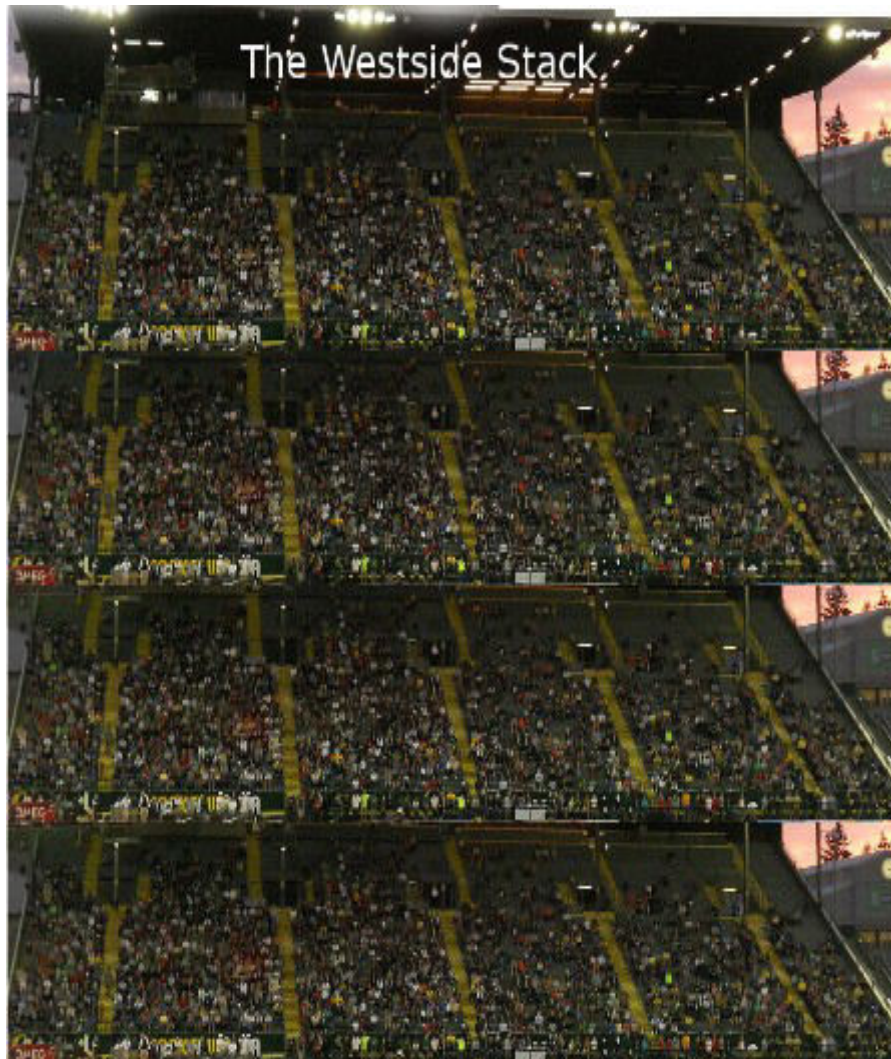
*A Qwacky Tale About the Birth of the University
of Oregon's New Hayward Stadium*

30 minutes

Mark Grant
June 2024

For where we are going, remember the image below. Park it in the back of your head if you can fit it there.

Each of the four sections you see can accommodate 4,300 fans. Each section is about 55 feet high and 70 meters wide, with a depth of around 30 meters. If you could pull it off, such a structure would accommodate up to 17,200 fans. It would be about 220 feet in height. 240 feet, if put on a twenty-foot platform—and we'll show why that seems necessary later. Leave aside all matters of feasibility, the need for scaffolding, etc. Just contemplate such a structure's breathtaking enormity. Then scroll down, to where the first of this two-part essay begins.



Part One

When Ducks Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Mark Grant July 22, 2022 - I would be remiss if I didn't take the uninitiated reader on a short stroll to our destination, which has everything to do with this unlikely seating arrangement.

Let's begin the first of this *two-part* essay in a nearby dimension, inside Moe's Tavern of Simpsons fame. See yourself sitting on a stool facing the taps, quite like Homer does here. Lenny and Carl are to the left of the mirror. The entrance/exit is just to the right of the bottles. Barney belches from somewhere nearby, signalling that it's time to leave.



Moe's exit turns out to be a stargate of sorts. As it fades from view, you see the place that inspired Moe's Tavern. You are leaving Max's Tavern, where Matt Groening came up with much of his Simpsons content. Forget everything you've heard to the contrary. When I lived in the area in the 1980s, Max' was every bit as seedy as Moe's was in the earliest Simpsons episodes. It stood out in smoky, defiant contrast to the local environment—like an out-of-shape, middle finger in the heart of a college campus that loved to think of itself as the jogging capital of the USA. The old Max's was grunge before grunge.

As one can easily confirm, Max's front door basically points straight at Skinner's Butte, some twenty minutes on foot. When you step out of Max's/Moe's and turn right, you wouldn't be in 'a' Springfield either. You would be walking *to* 'the' Springfield, which is about three miles ahead.



Your very short walk towards Springfield takes you through a pleasant, leafy corridor of low-rise shops and food places with a vintage campus vibe. In about five minutes, you reach a main intersection of sorts, where Ducks flock during lunch. Continuing in the same direction, you pass through the west entrance of a rather well-known college campus. This puts you about one hundred yards from where the Pioneer statue stands or once stood—the statue that inspired the Simpsons town statue of Jebediah Springfield, who was named after Eugene Franklin Skinner.

Now you know!



About halfway to where the Pioneer statue stands or once stood, you see, on your right, a building with columns. This is the principal's office, Johnson Hall, where the university president's office is located. They filmed the horse scene there in that 1978 blockbuster barf-fest, National Lampoon's Animal House. (Little's Market, where they shot the cucumber scene, is literally next door to Max's Tavern.)



I was attending high school a few miles down the road when they shot *Animal House*, and boy were we impressed. With only three major TV networks then, mass media was much more focused. American youth culture embraced the *Saturday Night Live* mentality that *Animal House* epitomized. Boy, were we impressed. John Belushi and the others put Eugene on the map. As for the effect it had at the university, I can't say if *Animal House* generated enough enthusiasm to dethrone Chico State as the region's reigning party school. I *can* say that a lot of Ducks were firing on all cylinders on weekends a few years later, and that they continue to sing that *Animal House* party song at every one of the football team's home games, *Shout*.

Rather than walk past Johnson Hall, you turn right just before you reach it. Paved paths lead you through a manicured collection of classic college flora and fauna—rubbery, trees, and brick buildings. In two or three minutes, the paths you choose take you to an elevated plateau that marks the start of a two-block stretch known as East 15th Street. Down its short slope you go, past some physical education facilities on your right. Looking in the same direction, a minute or two later that land flattens and you reach the practice track, where jogging was introduced to the United States around 1963.

Here's what this area looked like from the other side of that jogging track, during those *Animal House* times, when I attended the University of Oregon a few years later, and for many decades afterwards.



So, writing in June 2024, 44 years ago this month, a friend of mine ran across this very stretch of lawn. We had just graduated from high school earlier that month and hoped to catch a glimpse of the 1980 USA Olympic trials. We only got as far as area ‘A’ at the right end of the East Grandstand, where we were packed in with like-minded thinkers who didn’t have tickets either. It was a bit disappointing, but we did manage to see world-record holder Renaldo Nehemiah pass by from a few feet in front of us. He would have been the prohibitive favorite to win the 110-meter hurdles at the Moscow Olympics.

Fifteen minutes after we left Moe’s Tavern, our stroll has concluded. This is where we begin, at the Hayward Field one sees in the *Animal House* picture tells a tale of two eras.

The East Grandstand was emblematic of Hayward’s first incarnation, which dates back to the early 1920s. The West Grandstand is emblematic of the second era and to the University of Oregon’s biggest ‘big man on campus’ in school, the 5 foot, 8 inch Steve Prefontaine.

The one called “Pre” requires no introductions. Suffice it to say that this brash son of Oregon was so good at his craft that he made the 1972 US Olympic team in the 5,000 meters at the age of 21. He went to the Munich Summer Games with great expectations, but finished fourth behind Finland’s Lasse Viren, who went to win the 10k and 5k at Munich. While Pre went home medalless, Viren’s double made him one of the true superstars of the 1972 Summer Games, right up there with Olga Korbut and Mark Spitz.



As fate would have it, the Pre era coincided with the old West Grandstand's last days. Seeing the end draw near, Coach Bowerman decided to try hosting a major meet to raise funds for a new grandstand. As the track coach of the 1972 Olympic team, he had connections. These first major meets were held while the West Grandstand was under construction, in 1973 and 1974, during which time "Pre" became consumed with having a rematch race with Viren on *his* own home track. Talk about big men on campus. The next thing you know, Finland's national track team is heading to Hayward Field two months after the West Grandstand was finally done.

For whatever reason, Lasse Viren didn't show up. This would have been a huge disappointment to Prefontaine and his devoted Eugene fans, who knew their track and therefore Viren. Furthermore, they considered themselves to be contributors to Pre's very great success. It was under these dashed circumstances that Prefontaine won that 5,000.

"The renovated West Grandstands were completed early in 1975. However, the meet's continued success in bringing top tier talent to compete at Hayward Field and its ability to feed the insatiable appetite of the knowledgeable track and field fans in the community helped it become an annual fixture in the Oregon track season. It was to be renamed the Bowerman Classic..."

And this is where the anti-climax turned into an even greater tragedy. A few hours after Pre won the 5K, a party was held in nearby Hendricks Park to host the visiting Finland athletes. Pre attended and left the party around 12:30. Two or three blocks later, he was killed in a head-on collision. At the age of twenty-three, the great Steve Prefontaine was dead.

"On May 30th, 1975, eight days before the inaugural Bowerman Classic, the world lost Pre. On June 1st, Bowerman and the Oregon Track Club board announced that the meet would be renamed. "[Pre] was a driving force in the two Restoration meets," said Bill. "Our Oregon Track Club Board concurs that in living memorial to Pre – his inspiration, his ambition – the meet he did so much to make successful should bear his name. Next Saturday evening you may attend [the Steve Prefontaine Classic](#), a first step in a parade of opportunities to share directly in the dreams of Steve Prefontaine." – [preclassic.com/history](#)

This was the Eugene, Oregon, that I moved to in the summer of 1976. It was a time of protracted mourning over the loss of Pre, a feeling that would linger there throughout my high school and college years.

* * *

In 2014, ten years ago now, I returned to Eugene for a short visit. A college friend and I walked around Hayward's track. I spent a fair bit of time at Hayward during my Duck years, although I was only a recreational athlete. I used to run the stairs at the north end of the East Grandstand with regularity (B in the *Animal House* photo). For a few years after I graduated, whenever I was in town, I would make a point of running the West Grandstand stairs.

The track that my friend and I walked marked the earliest origins of Nike Inc. It was on this then-cindered track in 1955 that Bill Bowerman began training a Portland runner named Phil Knight. Nine years later, these Oregonians founded Nike Inc., which has since become the world's biggest sporting goods company by far.

#	Name	M. Cap
1	Nike 1NKE	\$143.38 B
2	Adidas 2ADS.DE	\$42.02 B
3	lululemon athletica 3LULU	\$39.11 B
4	Anta Sports 42020.HK	\$29.14 B

23 more rows



Companies Market Cap

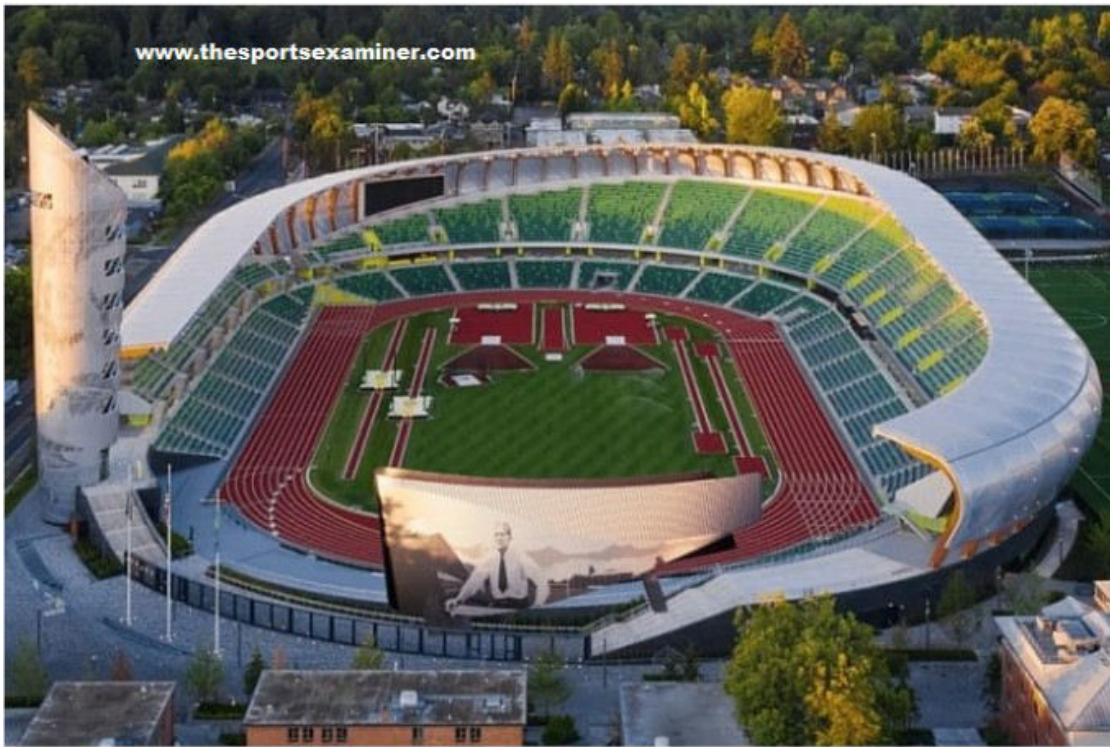
<https://companiesmarketcap.com> > sports > largest-com... ⋮

Largest sporting goods companies by market cap

The Hayward facility we circled in 2014 looked basically the same, except for a few new touches at the north end. There was a new statue of Bowerman, who transitioned in 1999, and some sort of building that I presumed was for VIPs. A very familiar look, as far as Hayward's *interior* was concerned. However, as we circled the track—in the heart of this place where I lived and spent four memorable years—I realized that I would have no idea where I was when I looked *outward* from the track in various directions.

Ten years later, this deletion of my Eugene past there continues. Earlier this month, North Eugene High's 2024 class flipped their collective tassel at a brand-new facility. My "old" school next door is scheduled for demolition, set to follow the shockingly recent example of the *Pac-12* athletic conference, whose sudden demolition severed my lifelong connections to the Pac-8 and Pac-10. In just a few months, 44 years after I began my freshman year, the University of Oregon will begin competing as a member of the Big Ten conference. None of these reminders of the transient nature of existence compare to what now involves that track that my friend and I walked around in 2014.

Since then, the *Animal House* Hayward has been completely replaced by what may be the finest dedicated track and field facility on Earth. If you think about it, the new Hayward Field is a monument to Nike's world-conquering success. For those who know, it is something much more than that. Companies like Nike need more than market share to produce stadiums like this. They need souls like Phil Knight, who basically paid for the whole thing himself, along with many other facilities that adorn Oregon's campus and beyond.



In this writer's opinion, the new Hayward Stadium and its 188-foot tower will go on to become the University of Oregon's most defining structure of the 21st century. Decades down the line, when the time comes to tear down this grand facility, it will have produced its own list of greatest stories, ones that the press will hail and the university will enshrine.

One story that may get lost, however, is the one regarding how this new stadium got built in the first place. What follows is a slightly edited version of a blog post that I wrote on that subject almost two years ago. At some point after the 2024 Olympic trials redirected my thoughts to Eugene, I thought it might be wise to convert that blog essay and this intro in pdf format, in case anyone wants to preserve a zany story that should, perhaps, be memorialized in its own way.

Part 2

Eugene, Oregon's new Hayward Field Stadium: a Multi-level Rush Job wrapped in a Mystery inside an Enigma

Mark Grant July 22, 2022 – I've been waiting for this for four years now.

Eugene, Oregon, my former hometown, is hosting the Super Bowl of track and field. The world championships. Oregon22, they call it. For track fans, it doesn't get any bigger than this, except for the Summer Olympics. This meet and its new crown jewel of a stadium, which this late-Boomer thinks of as *Hayward 2.0*, are arguably the culmination of a process that dates back more than a century now.

BACKGROUND

The first *Hayward* stadium (1.0) was built in 1919 and named after the University of Oregon's track coach, Bill Hayward. Two years later, it became the school's home for track and field. After 44 years, Bill Hayward was succeeded by another highly successful and long-tenured coach, Bill Bowerman. In the early 1960s Bowerman and one of his former runners, Phil Knight, founded a shoe company, Nike Inc., whose spectacular success began with Knight's used car, Bowerman's wife's waffle iron and her husband's homemade shoe designs.

Locals are well aware of this legendary grassroots start, and how *Bill and Phil's Totally Excellent Adventure* played a big role in helping Eugene become known as *Tracktown, USA*, a semi-permanent fixture for major meets like the NCAAs, the US Olympic Trials, the US track and field championships and now North America's only stop on the professional Diamond League circuit.

Bowerman transitioned in 1999, a few years after Knight decided that he was going to reinvent his alma mater, "Oregon," as Ducks usually call their school. Anyone who has followed Eugene's evolution this last quarter century must be impressed by Knight's initiatives. "Uncle Phil" and his wife Penny have and continue to pump billions into new buildings around a campus that Knight has made synonymous with the Nike brand through various flashy initiatives that began with the school's 1990s reinvention and ever-changing football uniforms.

At the 2012 Summer Olympics, marketers praised *Nike* for having called attention to its brand in virtually every track and field competition in London, by way of its greenish-yellow Volt series shoes. What a brilliant way to promote the *Nike* brand, they all concluded. Actually, green and gold are Oregon's traditional colors. [The Volt blend](#) concisely reflects Oregon's reinvented look. This is surely not a coincidence. Translation: Phil Knight and his staff at [One Bowerman Drive](#) also used the London Games to promote Nike and the University of Oregon, where the amazing story of Nike began. You have to know Eugene, Nike's birthplace, to see and appreciate this layered connection.

Well played.

Over 400 Olympians Used Nike Volts



Oregon's football uniforms may glow in the dark



According to a recent article from the [Daily Mail](#), over 400 athletes wore Nike Volts in competition at the London Olympics and of those 400, 68 athletes won Olympic medals, including 25 gold medals. Brian Strong,

* * *

It is hard to say exactly when the new Hayward Field project began. Much of the process was famously shrouded in mystery.

One early point was definitely April 16, 2015. That was when the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) awarded Eugene, Oregon, with the 2021 World Track and Field championships.

According to the [New York Times](#), Lamine Diack, the outgoing president of the I.A.A.F., said it was a “‘strategic decision, and to go to the United States is very important for us.’ Diack, an 81-year-old from Senegal, has served as I.A.A.F. president since 1999. He will not stand for re-election later this year and repeatedly had expressed a desire to see the world championships awarded to the United States.” For the record, Diack was not alone in his wish to see the USA host a world championship meet, as Eugene was reported to have received [23 votes out of 25 votes](#) during a secret meeting held in Beijing.

A *secret* meeting, indeed. Some people were very surprised to learn that Eugene had been awarded the 2021 Worlds without submitting a formal bid, including [European Athletics president, Norway’s Svein Arne Hansen](#): “...I am very surprised by **the complete lack of process** in the decision the IAAF has taken. The IAAF knew that Gothenburg was a serious candidate for the 2021 world championships. Swedish Athletics and the city had put in a lot of effort over the years to prepare the bidding application but they have not even been given the chance to bid for the event.”

Four months later, on August 19, 2015, Sebastian Coe replaced Diack as president of the IAAF, which would later change its name to World Athletics “WA” in October of 2019. Three weeks after Coe’s election, the following article appeared in Eugene, Oregon’s *Register-Guard* newspaper.

Tinker Hatfield Might Be Designing Something Much Bigger Than Sneakers Soon

The University of Oregon gets blessed again.

BY BRENDAN DUNNE

SEP 9, 2015



via [The Register Guard](#)

Less than one month later, Oregon basically announced that it would be giving Hayward Field a major makeover in time for the 2021 Worlds, then a seemingly comfortable six years in the future. That the talented Mr. Hatfield, a Nike VP, would so quickly produce a new Hayward Field rendering was proof of Phil Knight's early involvement. And Hatfield's image had made it at least as far as Eugene's local newspaper. It was clear that Hatfield wanted to preserve the old stadium's look and connection to the past. So, maybe Phil did too. (One should always ask about such things in Eugene.) Whatever the new version looked like, it would have to seat *at least* 30,000 fans, as this was the IAAF's minimum requirement.

This story took a surprising turn in April 2018, two and a half years after Hatfield began tinkering on his new Hayward stadium design. At an exclusive gathering of VIP donors, the University of Oregon announced that an entirely different stadium would be built. According to [Ken Goe of the Oregonian](#), "UO president Michael Schill, UO foundation president and CEO Paul Weinhold, and UO associate athletic director Vin Lananna struggled to answer basic questions at *Hayward 2.0's* big reveal.

Here's the main image of Hayward 2.0 that the VIPs were shown on April 18, 2018. It was quite the departure from Tinker Hatfield's vision. For where we are going, note that the tower would be 188 feet, comparable to a 19-story skyscraper. Also note the walkway that borders the north end of the stadium at the bottom of the image. See how its trees border what are dormitory lawns.



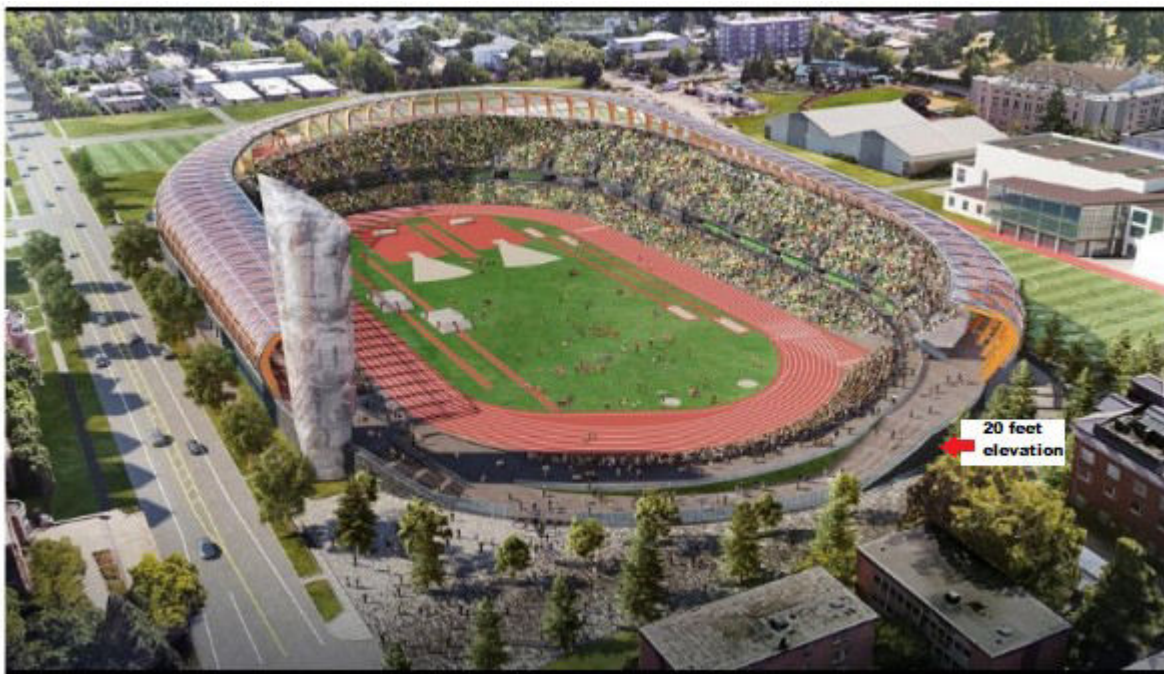
“‘I’m sure there are answers to these questions,’ wrote Goe, ‘But the people who could provide them weren’t available. Lead donors Phil and Penny Knight weren’t. Nor was anyone from the architectural firm SRG Partnership. Nor was anyone from Hoffman Construction, set to do the razing and reconstruction. Nor was semi-retired Nike troubleshooter Howard Slusher, the man who reportedly *ramrodded* the new design.’” (Italics mine.)

Construction of the new stadium had to begin immediately, it was announced. In order to be ready for the 2021 Worlds. And before that could happen, the old Hayward had to be torn down completely. East Grandstand. West Grandstand. Go Ducks Go. End of discussion.

Of course, many people objected to the fact to the fact that the new design was being pushed through without any public debate. Phil Knight was vilified by some of Oregon’s tallest Firs. [Kenny Moore](#) said it was a [perversely ignorant](#) tribute to Bowerman. (Knight had intended to name the tower after his former coach and business partner.) Hatfield described the new stadium as a monument to [architectural bufoonery](#). Neta Prefontaine, Pre’s sister, referred to the East Grandstand as a “[best friend](#).” Last-minute legal countermeasures were attempted, meetings were promised that were not kept. All for not.

A lot of people were, understandably, pissed. However, I’m not sure if Phil Knight was treated as fairly as he should have been in the weeks that followed. He seems to have been given no credit for deferring to Tinker Hatfield in the first place. Hatfield’s commentary on the new stadium does suggest that he and Knight discovered that they had strongly differing creative visions at some point after September of 2015. With the whole world looking on, and with Eugene’s, Oregon’s and the University of Oregon’s reputations all at stake, it would have been irresponsible for Phil Knight to *not* have a backup plan, if he began to think that he couldn’t work things out with his Nike VP.

Where does this put us on a timeline? At a glance, I read that it takes about twelve months to conceptualize stadiums or provide a rendering like the one that was introduced in April of 2018. This tells me that at some point between September 2015 and April 2017, Phil began thinking beyond Tinker Hatfield's vision.



Something about that presentation intrigued me almost from the moment I heard of the announcement. President Michael Schill and the others were basically promising that 17,500 temporary seats would be installed at the new stadium's north end—to go along with 12,500 permanent seats in a much smaller space. I knew that area very well. I used to run the East Grandstand's stairs throughout my student years, which were right where the tower was set to be placed. *Put 17,500 seats there?* Any such suggestion was completely ridiculous.

Now, I could see why an 81-year-old outgoing IAAF president from Senegal might not make such a connection. I could extend the same benefit of the doubt to those other IAAF members who also lived a hemisphere away from the corner of East 15th and Agate. Surely they must have thought that Nike would deliver on such a promise, if *Nike* said they could. Going the other way, I could not imagine how the University of Oregon's athletic director and president could fail to know that installing 17,500 temporary seats at the new Hayward's north end was totally unfeasible, especially given the design of the proposed stadium.

The *Oregonian's* Ken Goe seemed like the only journalist who wanted to question the new Hayward process. In those earliest days, with time still mattering if only in theory, I put together an impromptu blog post and emailed Ken a sketch that cited my feasibility concerns.

By Ken Goe

A few things ...

-- Mark Grant has looked at the renderings, examined the space, crunched the numbers and concluded if the University of Oregon builds the new Hayward Field the way the renderings suggest it would be built, and if all or most of the temporary seating for the World Outdoor Championships will be on the open north end, the temporary bleachers will be two or three times taller than the nine-story Bowerman Tower.

Grant wonders if there is another agenda in play here.

He writes "... surely those involved in Hayward 2.0 have thought long and hard about the temporary seating when they were drawing up their plans. And so they must have a plan in place, if they really intend to keep their promise to put 17,000 seats at Hayward 2.0's northern end. At the moment that presently seems outlandish to me. For that reason I say *the onus is on the designers to show the rest of how they plan to do this BEFORE the old Hayward is torn down.*"

You can [read his entire post](#) here.

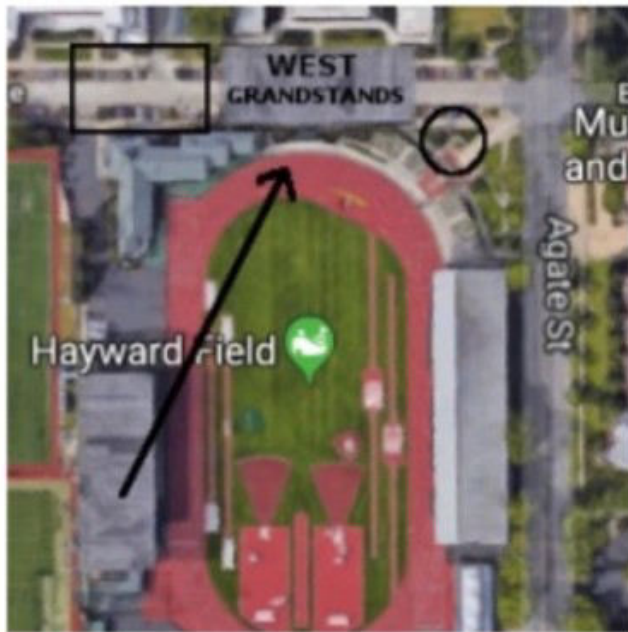
Soon afterwards, I began playing around with Hayward 1.0's West Grandstand, that living memorial to Steve Prefontaine. Its construction stood in stark contrast to the 2018 announcement. It was built from 1973 to 1975, through grassroots donor contributions and special track meets that featured the runner known as Pre. A few weeks after the West Grandstand opened, the Oregon runner died in a car crash in nearby Hendricks Park. His sudden death led to the poignant birth of the Prefontaine Classic, which has since become the USA's only stop on international track and field's world-class Diamond League circuit.



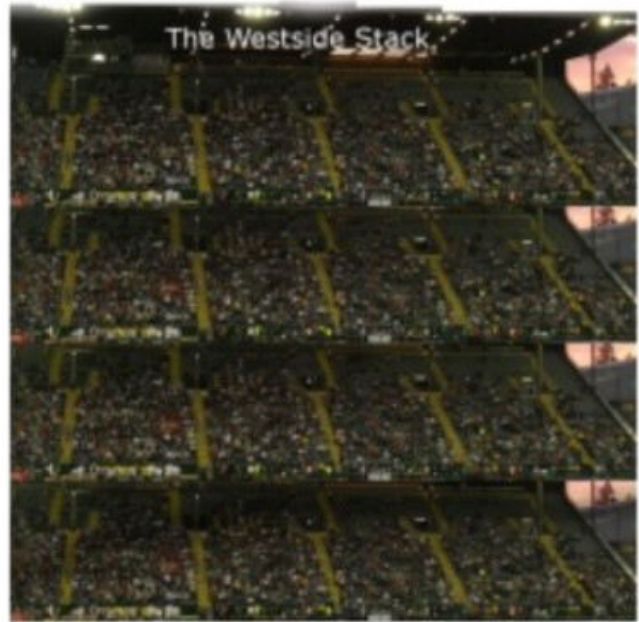
Since 1975, the West Grandstand has been seen by locals as a monument to Pre *and Pre's People*. Ironically, then, the West Grandstand also turned out to be a quite perfect measuring unit in 2018.

I was surprised to learn that the old West Grandstand's foundation would fit very neatly in Hayward 2.0's designated temporary area, almost perfectly, as seen in 'A' in the image below. At about 70 meters in width, it would occupy the same width as the interior part of Hayward's track. This was a necessary condition, given the new Hayward horseshoe glass, which would block sightlines at the extremes.

In the left-side image below, one sees a rectangular box near the upper-left corner. It is meant to show how small East 15th Street is. There is barely enough room for cars to go down a two-way street that is bordered on both sides by parked cars. Not a lot of space, but just enough if you were to reposition the West Grandstand along the new stadium's north edge, in theory. Yes, its back side would encroach on the dormitory lawns, somewhat, and students may have to use the back door for a while. But who cares? This was never about them anyway.



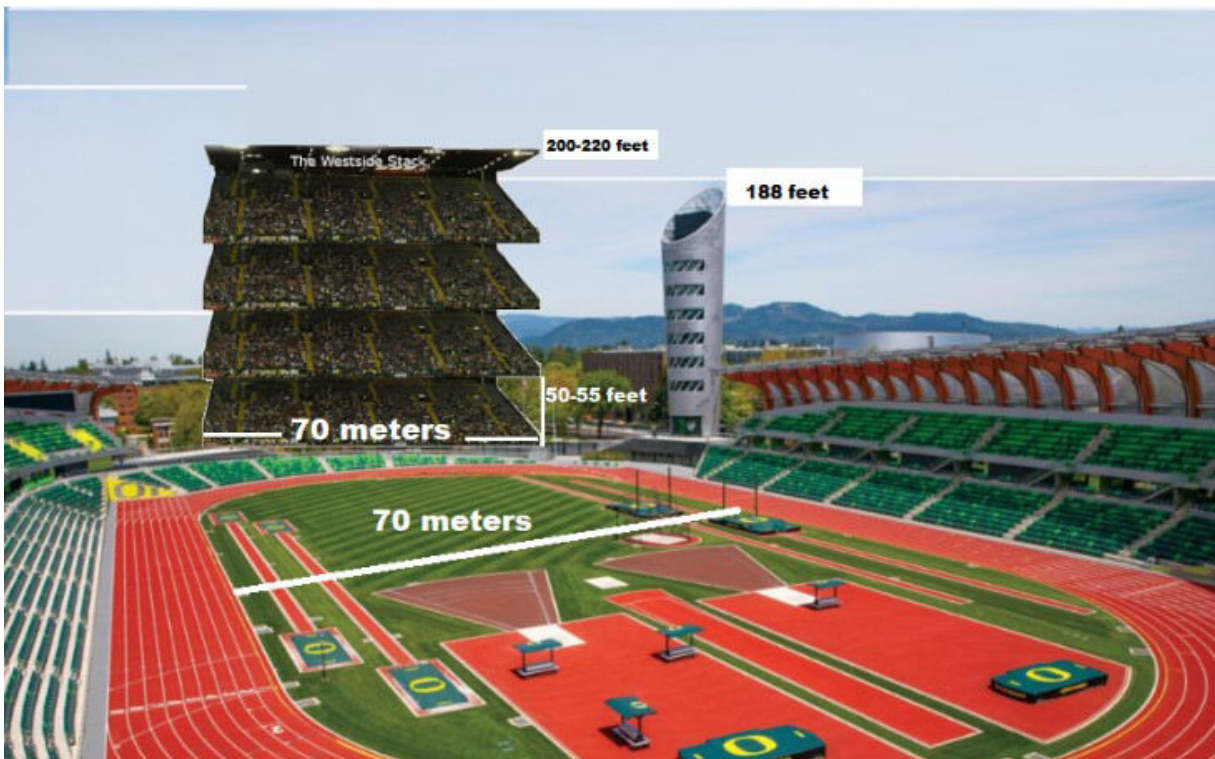
A



B

That's when it hit me. Just move the West Grandstand over to the north end, then stack three more West Grandstands on top of the first, as in image 'B'. Stack them all on a twenty-foot platform, so paying spectators will be able to see above the new Hayward's elevated walkway. A simple cut-and-paste job. Tack on a couple of 22-story elevators at each end, and you're done. *Presto!* Let the Games begin!

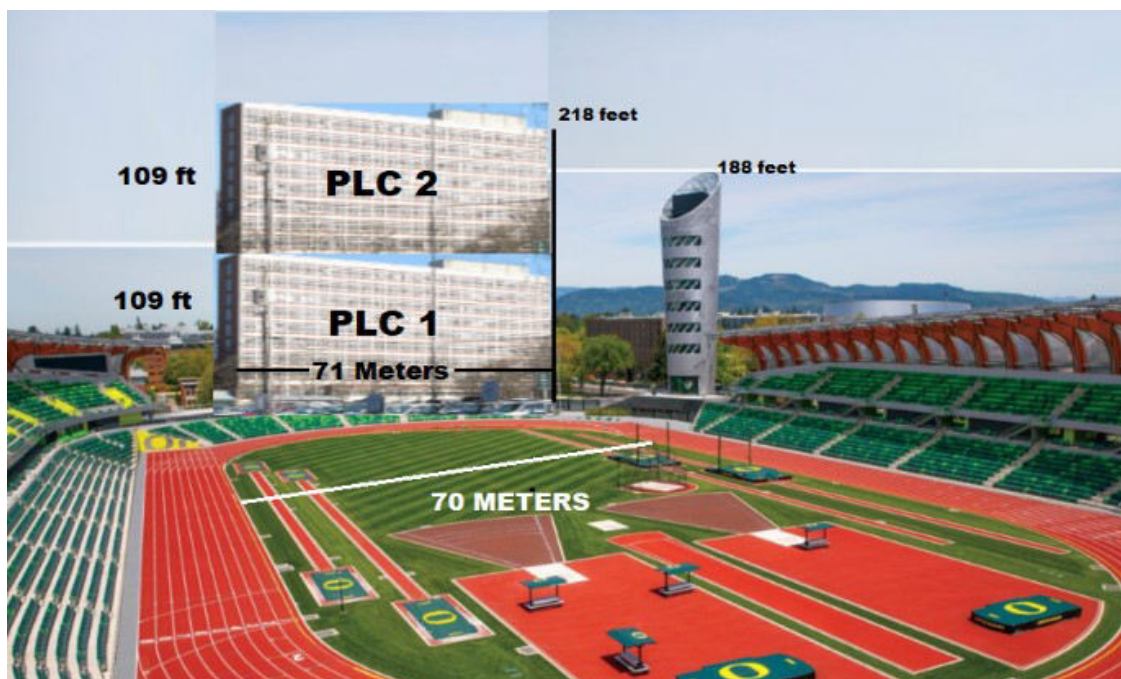
Seriously now, here is what the University of Oregon were promising in effect, as expressed in terms of a quite optimal use of space. Four West Grandstands, with a capacity of 4,300 seats, work out to 17,200 temporary seats—close to but not quite the required 17,500 seat goal. (Put the remaining three hundred on the roof.) The whole idea becomes even more ridiculous when you consider the need for scaffolding. All suggestions that the new Hayward could meet World Athletics' minimum requirement proposal was *Electric Kool-Aid-level Cuckoo's Nest* crazy.



My initial sketch estimate of the tower's height was about half of what it turned out to be, 188 feet. Despite this, the four West Grandstand configuration would be notably taller. In the image above they add up to about 200 feet, at 50 feet each, twelve feet higher than the tower. At 55 feet, it becomes thirty feet taller than the tower, and then we have to account for that platform.

With no West Grandstand to refer to, today's Ducks are invited to consider Prince Lucien Campbell Hall. At 109 feet, this monument to aesthetic indifference, "PLC," is basically exactly twice the height of the old West Grandstand. At 71 meters wide, it is almost exactly the same width. Just imagine two

PLC buildings stacked on top of each other on 15th Street. This is what a former university president was actually suggesting would happen. He has since moved on, to Northwestern, which I hear is a very good school. I doubt they have an engineering department, but I may be wrong.



In the end, nothing was going to stop this project and nobody was talking to anybody. The razing of the old stadium began on June 22, 2018 at 7 a.m. By 5pm that day, the old East Grandstand was a pile of rubble.

* * *

A few years passed.

And wouldn't you know it? Around one year later, the University of Oregon began saying that Hayward 2.0 would accommodate “up to 25,000” fans for the world championships. I don't recall anyone in Oregon's media asking about the original 30,000-seat promise then. Nor did World Athletics make a stink after they sidestepped the normal bid process in order to gift Eugene with the 2021 worlds.

Despite my strong skepticism, I confess that I still thought that the original 30k seating target might be met. Such is the power of the Nike mystique, especially if you're an Oregon Duck who has followed the university's trajectory in recent decades. Quite the contrary, as things turned out.

On the first Saturday of *Oregon 22*, Eugene's first senior world track and field championship meet, I learned that the capacity has been reduced even further. Hayward 2.0 would be accommodating 15,000 fans during these world championships—*half the promised number of 30,000 seats*.

Portland's *Oregonian* newspaper reported that “attendance at the World Athletics Championships in Eugene topped 54,000 in the event's first three days... Ticketed attendance totaled 13,646 for the championships' first day Friday, 19,543 on the second and 21,065 on Day 3, according

to *Oregon22* organizers.” The article points out that “each day had two sessions; the daily figures are combined attendance for both sessions.”

The arithmetic goes like this: Six sessions over three days. 54,254 paying fans. 9,042 fans per session on average. 9,042 out of 15,000 seats occupied per session, or 9,042 out of 30,000 when one recalls the Big Reveal of April 2018.

[As the *Register-Guard* reported soon after the meet: “Capacity at the stadium was roughly 15,000, with around 2,500 of those seats going to media and rights holders, leaving 12,500 seats for purchase.” The same article reported that paid attendance was 146,033 for the 10-day, two session event. That would mean a *paid* attendance of around 7,300 per session on average. So, paid attendance is either 7,300/15,000ths of the final capacity – less than half – or less than a quarter of WA’s original target of 30,000.]

So, now lets add 2,500 seats to go with the 9,042 sold ones and we have about 11,500 people sitting inside Hayward 2.0 on average. This works out to 76.9 percent of capacity. Oregon’s competition’s communications director, said, “We certainly feel quite good about our [percentage of stadium full](#) compared to previous World Championships.”

For some, it was true triumph of form over substance. Ironically then, a 9,000 seat stadium would have been more than *perfect* in the communication director’s way of thinking. There’s some irony. The old Hayward’s two grandstands accommodated 8,800.

WA President Sebastian Coe must be pleased that there isn’t a completely empty 17,200-seat temporary facility at Hayward 2.0’s north end that exceeds the height of the new tower. The new stadium is showing *very* well on TV during Oregon 22. Few television viewers will care about this backstory. They see a truly gorgeous venue and enough bums in seats to complete a very pleasing look. Revenue-wise, the TV viewers collective butt may be a more important revenue source than paid-for attendance. Optics may be the more important consideration.

Hmmmm. So, in April of 2018, the University of Oregon says it’s going to build a 30,000-seat stadium. Around June of 2019, they announced that it would instead seat up to 25,000 fans. Three years later, the university *continues* to repeat the baseless claim that the stadium will seat up to 25,000 fans. That would be equal to three of Pre’s old West Grandstands stacked on top of each other, to go along with a new giant scoreboard. Somebody, please call the math department.

July 2022 : <https://hayward.uoregon.edu/>

Hayward Field Fact Sheet

Construction Start: Summer 2018
Completion: 2020
Architects: SRG of Portland
General Contractor: Hoffman Construction
Funding: Fully funded by gifts from Penny and Phil Knight and more than 50 other donors
Capacity: 12,650 permanent seats; expandable to 25,000

If Ken Goe was correct, writing for the Oregonian in March of 2018, this wouldn't be the first time that this institute of higher education has missed big on track attendance numbers either, although "missed" might not be the right word. ‘

By Ken Goe

https://www.oregonlive.com/trackandfield/2018/03/ducks_need_to_come_clean_about.html

The University of Oregon's website lists [the seating capacity](#) of Hayward Field as 10,500.

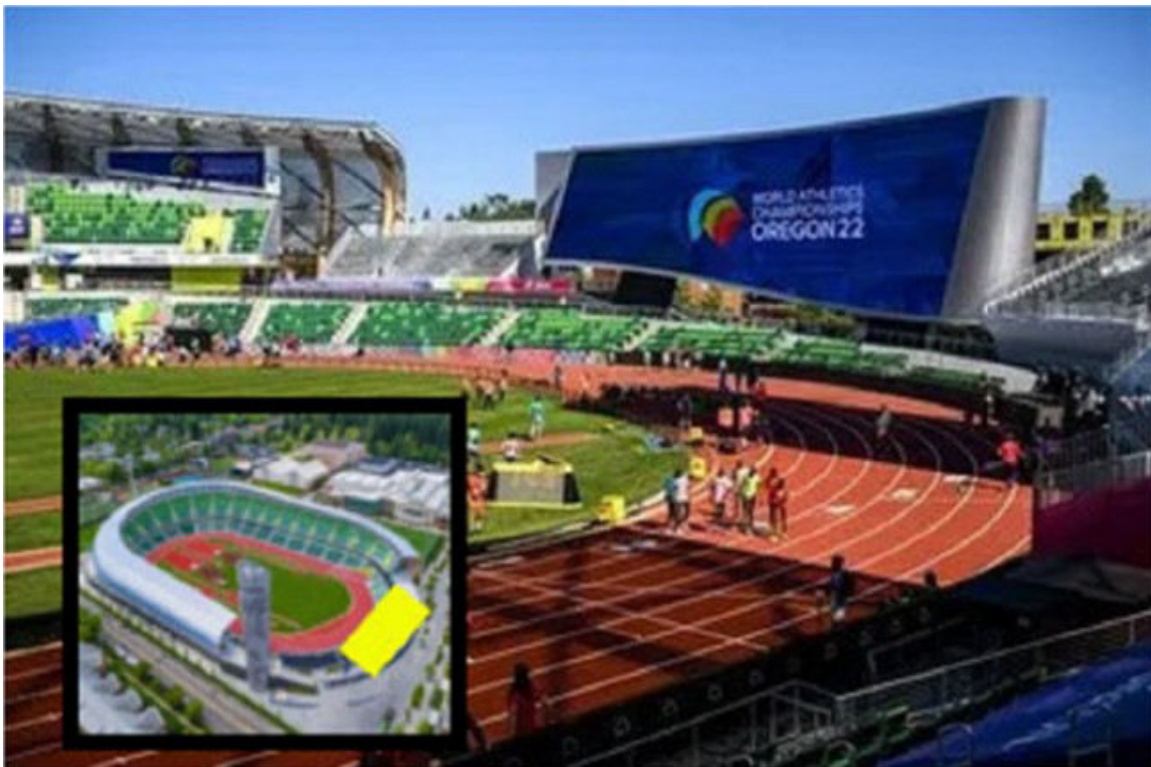
That isn't accurate. It's not close.

I know. I spent part of an afternoon last month counting the seats.

I came up with about 8,500. It's impossible to be exact because the cement benches in Powell Plaza on the track's northeast corner don't have numbered seats. I guesstimated Powell Plaza's capacity at 150.

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Here's what the north end of final project looks like.



SPECULATIONS

I now wonder if this 30k-to-15k process was a *bait-and-switch* from the start or close to it. I suspect this because, as things worked out, the University of Oregon put a giant scoreboard at Hayward's north end a few months before *Oregon22*. I would think that something massive took some time to plan. In the wider conversation, which began with the promise of April 2018, it is proof that the planners *completely* gave up on the 30,000 seat promise at some earlier point.

But when? Perhaps when Hatfield and Phil discovered their creative differences, it also became clear that the IAAF's 30,000 seat minimum would be problematic. Knight persuaded his ally Coe decided to relax the minimum standard, or be prepared to. Nike would make it worth Coe's time, and World Athletics, just as Nike had on many previous occasions.

This may come as a surprise, but I really like the new stadium. The only thing I would have added is some smoke and mirrors to go along with all of that glass.

That said, I'm sure that Bill Bowerman would have strongly objected to at least one of 2.0's features. Tinker Hatfield noted that its horseshoe design will catch winds and hinder some performances. He surely is correct. Bowerman was all about tweaking things for the sake of *improving* performance. We have the waffle iron.

Finally then, I'll close this *I Told You So* essay by mentioning a comment that Phil Knight made around the time when unspeakable things were being done to the old East Grandstand. He predicted – not seriously, I hope – that he would become the most hated man in Eugene for pushing Hayward 2.0 through.

On the contrary, Phil Knight is one of the most respected men in Eugene, Oregon for *many* good reasons. What he and his wife Penny have done and continue to do is really something special – there and beyond. It is extraordinary.

The new Hayward stadium is many things. Above all, I see it as a monument that reflects one very talented man's unceasing generosity and determination to give back.

Billionaires take note.

* * *

Two years later, as the 2024 US Olympic trials unfold, the more I think about the new Hayward Stadium concept, the more I like it. The more I see this as a brilliant long-term play by Phil Knight that represents a win-win situation on various levels.

By gifting his alma mater with what is arguably the best track stadium in the world, Phil Knight has given the University of Oregon its best chance of recruiting the best track talent on a year-to-year basis for decades to come. He has personally ensured that Hayward Field will continue to attract major meets and the revenue and jobs that go with it.

At 200-plus million dollars, Phil's new stadium is already well on the way to paying for itself, and then some. In a recent article, the Eugene *Register-Guard* said that these 2024 US Olympic trials will add 30

million dollars to the local economy. Oregon 22 supposedly delivered an economic impact of 153 million, according to an article that appeared in the Sports Examiner in April 2023.

World Athletics and the IAAF have always wanted a strong presence in the United States. Phil Knight has gifted WA a permanent American fixture that they can use at zero cost. Of course, WA will want to explore other American markets. But they will always have Hayward in their corner, as they have for decades.

I could probably write about similar macro-benefits. What I'd like to say instead is how much Hayward's new stadium reflects Phil Knight's thoughtfulness *in general*. The rest of us just see the final products. They are *not* Nike's creations. They *are* the creations of Phil Knight, a single soul who has literally spent decades *thinking* about how to make Oregon a better place.

As far as the *politics* of this operation go, I was totally okay with the university steamrolling this project *if it was their right to do so*. I still am. The only blemish I see is something innocuous, what I decided to write about: the decision to say at the big reveal in April of 2018 that Hayward's designers expected to add the IAAF's required 17,500 seats. That far into the rendering process, those involved had to have known that this was an unrealistic goal. My guess is that the decision to handle things this way had to have come from Phil Knight.

What if instead, those at the big reveal said that they hoped to meet the seating minimum. What if they had been allowed to say, if asked, that the new stadium's designers were working closely with World Athletics on this? If pressed further, what if they were allowed to say that WA may reduce the required amount if necessary? What if the presenters were advised to discuss how the new Hayward would benefit World Athletics and the world of track for decades? What if Sebastian Coe was briefed on the same talking points. What if he backed such statements from the other side of the Atlantic, when the press came calling? A real, intelligent conversation.

Like I said, this is really not a big deal. Still, as an impromptu, self-appointed grader of stadium projects, I must deduct a half-letter grade based on the front-end presentation and give Uncle Phil a still-solid *A-minus* on the new Hayward Stadium.

As for Michael Schill and others at Johnson Hall, we all understand the pressure to go along with things in this era. Still, I wonder if anyone in the university core group even mentioned that the 17,500 seat promise might be a bad look for an institution that purports to be about higher education. Maybe it's just me, but this looking away whenever it's convenient seems so typical of academia in general. Until further notice then, I guess I'll have to give Oregon admin a *C* for what seems like a very routine performance.

Mark Grant graduated *laude daude* from the University of Oregon in 1985, with honor, and a major in International Studies and minors in Economics, Political Science and Sociology. He enjoys life, has done a bunch of stuff and is the host of hockey-stars.ca, a website about the birth and earliest evolution of Ice Hockey.



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