

Matthew Centrowitz

Like Father Like Son

“Like father like son.” The phrase is tattooed across Matthew Centrowitz’s chest and he’s proud to show it off. That’s because Matthew and his father, who goes by Matt, are almost one in the same. For starters, they share a name, but they also attended the University of Oregon, ran the 1500 meters, and are both two-time Olympians.

After missing a medal by .04 seconds in 2012, Matthew was determined to let it fuel him, not frighten him. Between winning the 1500 at the 2016 Indoor World Championships and the last three U.S. Championships he competed in (2013, 2015, and 2016 indoors), and being the most confident, fit, and competitive version of himself so far had him going from a first-timer in 2012 to being among the favorites in 2016.

A stress reaction in the spring of 2016 deterred his training but he was back to health with six weeks remaining before the Trials, where he closed in 53 seconds to break a 36-year-old meet record in 3:34.09 and erase any doubts about his fitness.

Matthew went from running a record-breaking time in Eugene to a race in Rio that lacked speed but made up for it with strategy. The Olympic 1500 final tends to be a slow, tactical race, and Matthew was prepared for anything fast or slow. His time, 3:50.00, was the slowest by an Olympic champion since Luigi Beccali of Italy won in 3:51.2 at the 1932 Games in Los Angeles.

Though the heavy favorite was Asbel Kiprop of Kenya, the 2008 Olympic champion and a three-time world champion, he finished a distant sixth. Matthew almost led from start to finish, something he usually doesn't do. Ayanleh Souleiman of Djibouti, the 2014 world indoor champion at the 1500, pulled ahead of Matthew with about 500 meters remaining and ran toward the outside of lane 1. In what has become somewhat of Matthew’s signature move—he had slithered through an opening along the rail at the world track and field championships twice before—he made a move along the inside rail with about 450 meters remaining and ran a blistering final lap in 50.62 seconds. His preparation and confidence gave him the ability to race well at any pace.

Matthew Centrowitz’s 1500 win was an American first since Mel Sheppard took the Olympic gold medal 108 years ago.

Questions For Thought:

1. Matthew Centrowitz believes in his finishing kick. Do you finish well? How could you improve this?
2. Centrowitz runs with a very relaxed technique. How is technique developed?
3. Centrowitz was prepared for any possibility. How important is preparation?