

Quentin Brelsford – Birmingham 1938



At the time of his graduation from Birmingham High School in 1938, Quentin Brelsford was already something of a legend. He was from a running family—his brothers Harry and Clayton were big names before him. Harry was a school record holder in the mile. Clayton was the Class B runner-up in 1932 and a Big 10 mile champion for Michigan. Quentin said he got his start in running by delivering papers: “As a kid I peddled newspapers and I found out on foot I could do the circuit in town quicker than on a bicycle because I could cut through empty yards and through hedges. That got me running.” He won the Class B title in the half mile three straight years, a feat no one else ever accomplished (not even in the D2 years). He set a state record of 1:55.4 that lasted for 23 years. Then, despite losing what might have been the best years of his running career to World War II, he returned to win the NCAA cross country title.

Career Highlights:

1936 – Won the Class B title as a sophomore in 2:06.1, after winning his regional in 2:05.8.

1937 – Won the Class B title in 2:03.0.

1938 – Set a meet record at Mansfield after a poor start, winning by 50 yards in 1:59.2. Won his third Class B title in a meet record 1:57.6. Two weeks later, at the Michigan AAU meet, he ran 1:55.4 to slice 1.8 off the state record. He led the nation's high schoolers that year.

1939 - Brelsford was just 17 in his senior season of track, and because of his young age, did not graduate until January 1939, giving him, in effect, a gap season before he started at Michigan. He won the Michigan AAU title that spring.

1940 – As a Wolverine frosh, he again captured the Michigan AAU crown, this time in 1:56.5.

World War II – Enlisted in the Air Force, where he learned to repair aircraft engines. He served in Italy and Morocco. In 1944, in an Allied military meet in Rome, he placed 2nd in the 800.

1946 – Competing for tiny Ohio Wesleyan, he placed 3rd in the NCAA mile in 4:16.1. In the fall, he won the NCAA cross country race on the final stretch, covering the 4M course at MSU in 20:22.9, a victory that surprised many.

1947 – Placed 5th in the NCAA mile. In the fall, he finished 3rd in the NCAA cross country nationals. He had been running in the lead when he went down on the slippery, snow-covered course in the final quarter mile. It was the only cross country defeat in his OWU career.

1948 – Won the Michigan AAU Indoor 2M in 9:34.4. Placed 3rd in the NCAA 5000 in 15:14.7. Attempted to make the Olympic team at 10,000, but blisters on both feet slowed him. In the 5000, he finished a disappointed 11th.

Brelsford went to work for Ford after his running years were over, spending much of his time in Latin America as a mechanical engineer. After retirement, he was a track official in the Orlando area.

At the age of 97, Brelsford did a long interview with Gary Cohen (<http://www.garycohenrunning.com/Interviews/Brelsford.aspx>).