





He'd done better the year before, but not by much. And what he'd done this time was the first evidence to his coach, Al Miller, that he could become one of Oregon's best prep distance runners.

Then came this year's Willamette Relays. Miller took a handful of locals and in the distance medley, Skandera ran the mile in 4:37.8, his best clocking for a DHS team.

It looked for sure like he was making a comeback. But the run was costly. He reinjured the foot and it looked like his prep track career had come to an end.

But it hadn't. He traveled to Eugene where his foot was examined and he had a special tennis shoe build-up by none other than Oregon Track Coach Bill Bowerman.

If he was going to run competitively again, he was told, he'd better use tennis shoes for a while and workout on grass rather than the track.

For two weeks, Skandera worked out easily on the grass, missing two meets. Then came the Wa-Hi Relays and the mile team race. The Dalles team finished fourth in this event.

Skandera, though getting back on the campaign trail, still was in tennis shoes. Next came the dual meet with Bend at home, where Miller decided enter him in the newest event in Oregon prep circles—the two-mile run. It wasn't a speed test so much as one of endurance—and testing the foot.

Skandera not only made the required eight circuits of the 440-yard course, but won the event in 10:37.3. It wasn't a spectacular time, but he showed a strengthening foot, which was the major consideration at the moment. But he still was wearing tennis shoes.

Then came his first crack at the mile in a four-way meet here. Against Redmond, Wy'east and Jesuit, he came in second clocked at 4:49.0.

Later, in a dual meet with Pendleton here, he took second in the mile again, this time finishing quite a ways behind smooth Harold Delamarter of the Buckaroos, but in an improved 4:47.0—and for the first time in several weeks in track shoes. Delamarter clocked a 4:42.0.

Next for The Dalles runner was the metric meet in Bend. In two events there, he ran fifth in the 1,500-meter event in 4:28.0, and fifth in the 800-meter run in 2:09.0. Winning time in this event was 2:02.9 by favored Herb Hickman of Bend.

Then came one of the season's main tests—the subdistrict meet at Bend.

His times improved in both the mile and 800. Finishing third in the mile, Skandera was clocked at 4:43.0.

But in the 800, also finishing in third place, he came home in 2:03.6, a new Dalles High School record. It bettered John Merriss' year-old mark of 2:03.9. What's more, it told both him and Miller that the foot had pretty well healed and he could start "letting out."

There remained still another test. The district meet was upcoming at Hermiston. Was he really ready?

Everyone knows the answer to that now. He was. He sped around the oval twice and almost won the event, clocking the best run of his career a 1:59.8.

He not only set a new Dalles High School record, but bettered the former meet mark of 2:05.0 by Bend's Herb Hickman a year ago and beat his own record of 2:03.6 set just a week earlier in the subdistrict meet at Bend.

Winning this event in the district was Dick Hall of Pendleton, just a step ahead of the rejuvenated Skandera at 1:58.4. And just a step behind him was another Pendletonite, Delamarter, in 1:59.9.

Skandera can credit several things to his fine comeback—Miller's influence, Bowerman's shoe build-up and training plan, his own off-season training, or even jogging last winter to the Howena Loops and back.

But more than anything else, it was perseverance. If he hadn't really made the effort and stayed with it, he already would have hung up his spikes.

But this weekend, Skandera, as one of two representatives from The Dalles and one of more than 30 from District 7-A1, will be back on the track again when the state meet is held at Corvallis.