

Blog Entry – Talking with a Legend, American Miler, Don Bowden

It's been great working with Bring Back the Mile and integrating myself into their inspiring campaign. I have been organically growing into my role as the California Captain, which is no small task and being a part of the campaign is giving me opportunities to meet some of Track & Field's biggest names.

I am not a fan of fanatics of any kind, but have to admit that I do get a little star struck with certain people. The funny thing is I never know who is going to make me feel awe-struck until I actually meet them. Recently it happened and all it took was a phone call. His name is Don Bowden and he is the first American to break the 4-minute barrier, which he accomplished on June 1, 1957 at the young age of 20 in Stockton, CA. That day he clocked a 3:58.7 Mile and it was his only sub-4 minute Mile in his career.

Originally, I left him a message and within a day or two he had returned my phone call. I was actually on a Skype call when my home phone rang and since I didn't recognize the number I let it go to my answer machine. I continued with my Skype call until the voice on the machine began speaking, *'this is Don Bowden returning your call...'* I freaked out and told the person on the Skype call that I had to go and hung up on them to try to catch Don before he finished leaving his message.

Upon answering I tried to say hello without sounding like I was out of breath. I don't remember everything that I said or that Don said during the entire conversation, but the general feel of the conversation entailed me telling Don that I was trying not to freak out while we spoke and that we could really use any support he could give to our campaign to bring back the Mile to the state of California. He was very gracious for my admiration of him and his achievements and he said that he's more than willing to do whatever he can to help our cause because *he still believes in the beauty and significance the event contributes specifically to the sport of Track & Field and generally, to the landscape of American culture.* I agreed with him wholeheartedly and thanked him for his time.

He ended the conversation by extending an invitation to me and other top Milers like David Torrence, who is from his alma mater UC Berkeley, to sit down with him sometime for a meal the next time I'm in the Bay Area. I told him I look forward to taking him up on that offer sometime in the very near future. That'll certainly be an interesting write-up for my blog series!

Our conversation may have been brief, but the memory of hearing his voice will last for the rest of my life. We both know what it's like to conquer one of sport's greatest barriers as well as one of life's greatest barriers – fear. I hope I get to meet Don in-person because it would just add to the joy of what it means to be a part of that very special club of sub-4 minute Milers and to the experience that has been my journey as a runner. But even if we never meet in-person, I truly believe we'll always be deeply connected simply because we've both been to *the other kingdom*.