

THE DECATHLON ASSOCIATION

DECA Newsletter

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BEACH WITH PREP RECORD at GSW 7719 – 7466 Scores

Hello Again.... Albuquerque's Curtis Beach, eager to improve on his earlier score and leave no doubt about his prep legacy, easily captured the Great Southwest high school decathlon on Thur-Fri, June 3-4 at the University of New Mexico. But, instead of doing just ten events, he completed 13 to set the record straight about who holds the prep decathlon record. His 7719 winning score was more than 700 better than 2nd place. And, using international implements he posted a 7466 mark to take Craig Brigham's name off the books.



**Great Southwest Decathlon
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM
June 4-5, 2009**

After he had scored 7909 at the Arcadia affair in May, *T&F News* compared his achievement to an older (1972) mark by Craig Brigham of South Eugene (OR) HS which, under the current set of tables, converts to 7359 and has always been carried as the high school decathlon record using international (16lb sp, 2kg disc, 42' hurdles) implements. "Expert consensus is that the Brigham mark remains marginally

And, one correction in last week's Newsletter: all photos from Götzis should be credited to Richard Hunter, director of the Hexham meeting, of Venator International. Apologies for the oversight.



Curtis Beach left no doubt about who holds the prep decathlon record with his 3rd win at Great Southwest.
[photo: DyeStat]

superior," wrote *T&FN* in their June, 2009 issue (p.36). Further, they wrote that "there's no usable conversion factor between high school implements and international ones, so assigning relative worth to Beach's performance vs. Craig Brigham's 37 year old national record of 7359 is difficult."

Regrettably both statements were erroneous. Even Craig would agree. For years coaches have been using a 250-300 point conversion as a reasonable assessment

of the score differences. It is not perfect but has been sensibly successful for a generation. And 300 points is the outer limit, making Beach's 7909 approximately on par with a 7600 score with international implements. Again, although only an approximation, this conversion is widely known and accepted in the multi world.

Asked about the *T&FN* statement, Beach said, "I didn't think it was a legitimate analysis, but I wanted to prove I was the national record holder."

With that in mind he requested that international implements be on hand to prove his point. The GSW management obliged and Curtis took 3 additional shot puts with a 16 lb ball, 3 more throws with the 2kg discus and ran a second hurdle race with 42' hurdles.



Beach started his record run with a 11.05 century win. [photo: DyeStat]

It was a precedent set in 1972 when South Eugene HS coach Harry Johnson had Brigham do the very same thing at a pair of April meets in Eugene.

When the dust cleared in Albuquerque (no slap @ New Mexico!) Beach had scored 7719 points with the high school implements and 7466 points with

their international counterparts, a difference of 253 points. Enough said.

As for the meet itself, Curtis won all the first day events including two with PRs (7.19m/23-7¼ long jump and 47.96 400m). His 1st day scores stood at 4141/4006.

He started day #2 with a 14.38 '39 hurdle win then, several minutes later, ran 14.77 with '42 barriers. Relatively weak long throws sandwiched a PR 4.70m/15-5 vault clearance. With one event remaining he needed but 4:42 to break Brigham's mark. His leisurely 4:26.40 left no doubt that he was the event's prep record holder no matter what the implements.

Confused yet? There is a *third* set of implements, the IAAF international *Junior* implements (6kg/ 13.23lb shot and 1.75kg disc/3.86lb) for the shot and discus, that Curtis will get a chance to use at the USA Junior champs in Eugene at the end of the month. There was talk that he would try for a 7550 international score in Albuquerque thereby qualifying him for the USA Senior decathlon. That would make him the first prep athlete in the senior decathlon since 1966, when the qualifying standard was *considerably* lower.

2009 Great SW HS Decathlon Curtis Beach

		HS pts	Int Pts
100m	11.05 (-0.1)	850	850
LJ	7.19m/23-7¼ (0.0)	859	859
SP	13.22m/43-4½ 11.00m/36-1¼	681	546
HJ	2.04m/6-8¼	840	840
400m	47.96	911	911
110H	14.38 +1.0 / 14.77 +2.1	938	878
Disc	36.08m/118-4 32.54m/106-9	585	515
PV	4.70m/15-5	819	819
Jav	42.13m/138-3	473	473
1500m	4:25.40	775	775
Total		7719	7466

“I’m very glad I got it today in my home town,” Beach said immediately after the 1500m. It was time to celebrate. But for those who, in a celebratory glee, headline Curtis as the “Greatest High School Decathlete in History,” I would remind you of Bob Mathias and Milt Campbell. The former won the Olympic decathlon gold medal at age 17 and the latter an Olympic silver medal as a teenager at Plainfield (NJ) High School.

A warning. It is easy to get excited about prep talent and Curtis is a special talent. But let’s not canonize anyone this early. We are only 6 years removed from an Idaho multi-eventer who was called the “greatest recruit in history.”

The more I thought this the more I dug into high school athletes who have qualified/competed at the USA national decathlon championships, which celebrates its 90th renewal in a few weeks in Eugene. Brigham himself did not compete in the 1972 AAU decathlon, but did place 11th at the US Olympic Trials (they were different meets in those days). The following year the AAU initiated a “real” junior nationals (for teenagers and not for those who had not won, for eg. an IC4A title) and Brigham won the first AAU junior decathlon as an Oregon frosh in 1973.



Prep Decathletes at the USA National Championships

The most recent prep talent to compete at the USA nationals was Alvin Pearman, a New York schoolboy (Long Island’s Roosevelt HS), who was characterized as “the next Rafer Johnson.” That was 1966 and no schoolboy has made it to the USA senior nationals since. Unfortunately Pearman’s collegiate career never lived up to his high school promise. In 1959 a pair of California prep decathletes,

Paul Herman (Reseda HS) and Dixon Farmer (Orinda) HS placed 6th and 7th at the AAU meet and were ranked 5th and 6th nationally. Both had subsequent notable careers and Herman was 4th at the 1964 Olympic decathlon in Tokyo.

In 1954 Rafer Johnson, a senior at Kinsburg (CA) High, placed 3rd at the AAU decathlon in Atlantic City, at age 18. He had previously won a pair of California state prep decathlons. Rafer later won a pair of Olympic medals including the decathlon gold in Rome in 1960. At the same time Aubrey Lewis, Montclair, NJ, twice placed at the AAU decathlon as a high school student.

Milt Campbell was an 18 year old high school junior when he placed 2nd at the 1952 Olympic Trials/AAU meet and the Olympic Games in Helsinki. And, of course there is Mathias, who, by age 19, had won a pair of national AAU titles, and the Olympic gold, all as a prep athlete.

There have been others, of course, but the first prep athlete to make his decathlon mark was Harry Goelitz, a senior at Oak Park (IL) HS, who won a major international decathlon in Chicago in 1913, a year in which the AAU offered an all-around championship but no decathlon.

Harry was running prodigy and his victory in July, 1913 caught the attention of Harry Gill who recruited him to the University of Illinois. Goelitz won the AAU 120yd highs a year later and paced the Illini to a Championship of America (in days when the label was apt) win at the Penn Relays in the 4x880yd relay. In 1920 he made the US Olympic decathlon team with a 4th at the Trials. But, in 1913, when the decathlon was in its American infancy, Goelitz, 19, was a prep senior who entered the International Games and pasted a very good 5 man field. Unfortunately the meet director, Martin Delaney of the Chicago AA, refused to use the IAAF scoring tables and

tallied the meet on a points-per-place basis, with low scoring winning. (ed: groan!) Goelitz won with 26 points. Even worse, only the individual winning event marks were reported, so details do not exist to convert Goelitz's performances into a "score." Yet, given the marks of the 3 events he did win (100m, 400m and 110mH) and his known skills in the other 7, it is likely he had the highest score in the world in 1913. Yet the details have never been found. I know, I've tried. They probably are in the personal effects of Delaney or Goelitz in some family survivor's attic.

In 1913 Goelitz was labeled as "another Jim Thorpe." Be careful of labels