

THE DECATHLON ASSOCIATION

DECA Newsletter

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A VAULTING SOLUTION

Boyles Offers Answer to Shipping Poles

Hello again.....I thought that issue #43 was the last of the year until I was contacted by recently retired and world class decathlete Chris Boyles. He reminds us that the issue of shipping vaulting poles has bedeviled track coaches for decades. I clearly recall Sam Adams and I standing on an indoor airport runway in Moscow in 1978 and watching our team's vaulting poles being transferred to a domestic Soviet airline for transport to the Ukraine. The occasion was the annual USA-USSR team decathlon. As Soviet baggage handlers pitched, dropped and walked over our poles Sam and I could only stare in disbelief. We had no recourse but to watch as and, sure enough, when we arrived in Donetsk, Ukraine, more than one of the poles was broken. Every coach and every athlete has his own war stories about broken or lost vaulting poles. Some would be amusing if they were not so tragic and personal.

Today fewer and fewer airlines carry vaulting poles and we are relegated to shipping firms. Enter Mr. Boyles...

Fly-Away Pole Protection, LLC was formed in April, 2009 by Chris Boyles (with the help of Paul Terek) to provide colleges, universities, high schools and post-collegiate athletes with the fully-insured shipping of their pole vault poles.

Traveling with poles has always been challenging, but in recent years, the



challenge has turned into a nuisance. It used to be relatively "easy" to travel with poles as most airlines accepted them as oversized baggage without much hassle, by paying a small fee. Since Sept 11, however, the only airline out there that consistently will take poles is Southwest Airlines and they fly limited routes. Frequently, schools and individuals travel to competitions in locations that aren't serviced by Southwest or simply don't want to deal with them at the airport.

Many individuals began to hire shipping companies to pickup and deliver their poles to competitions. You'd call a freight company and try to explain exactly what you want to ship, and most of the time they have no idea what you're taking about.

Initially, the shipping companies allowed individuals to insure the poles for their actual value, but in recent years have put a cap of \$500 on the entire bag of poles (sometimes valued up into the thousands). The risk in shipping had simply become too much. We've heard many horror stories of poles



being returned completely smashed and individuals being given \$500 to replace an entire bag of poles! This has happened numerous times within the multi-event community as well. The current way of traveling with poles is inefficient, risky and costly and led us on a search for a solution.

Fly-Away Pole Protection has an independent insurance policy that allows us to fully insure the shipment of ALL the pole vault poles of colleges, universities, high schools and post-collegiate athletes, regardless of the courier we utilize. If poles are broken, lost or stolen in shipping, your poles are replaced! Along with full insurance coverage, all of our shipments include door-to-door pickup and drop-off (we pick the poles up from your school and transport them directly to your hotel or competition site) and tracking information.

We offer one-time shipping. This is self-explanatory and is setup for those who only need to ship their poles one time. Shipping includes door-to-door pickup/drop-off, full insurance coverage and tracking information at one, all-inclusive cost. We then offer 2 membership groups, a bronze membership and a silver membership. With both memberships, clients pay an annual fee and receive significant discounts in shipping rates, with bronze members receiving a discount when compared to one-time shippers and silver members receiving the best pricing possible. Within each membership, the fee(s) vary depending on the estimated number of poles you will travel with throughout the year. The bronze membership is designed for the non-frequent traveler. Typically, if you're shipping one pole bag 2-3 times/year, this is the suggested service for you. If you were traveling with up to 8 poles throughout the year, the bronze membership fee would be \$95; up to 16 poles for \$140; up to 24 poles for \$185.

The silver membership is our highest level and designed for the frequent traveler.

If you're traveling 4 or more times/year (or traveling less frequently with multiple pole bags), this is the suggested service for you. If you were traveling with up to 8 poles throughout the year, the silver membership fee would be \$150; up to 16 poles for \$200; up to 24 poles for \$250.

To give you an example rate quote, as a silver member we could ship one pole bag to and from many locations for under \$120! Typically, we can ship to most locations in 2 business days. We do offer overnight service as well at an additional cost. We also handle international shipments on an individual basis.

We keep track of pole inventories in a database. Each pole an individual would ship is entered in our system and assigned a number. When vault bags are packed for a shipment, you would simply send us an email, text or call and let us know the poles that you're shipping (ie. "Chris, we're packing poles 1,3,8,9,11,15 & 16 for this shipment to Seattle"). This way we know the exact "at risk" value for each shipment and make processing any claims much easier for everyone.

It truly is our goal to be able to remove this huge headache from coaches and athletes. We do and will always continue "fighting" to decrease both transit times and rates. The more volume we do, the more leverage we ultimately have in negotiating some of these things. We certainly welcome any comments or suggestions you may have, as that's how we're going to make this business and our service the absolute best it can be.



Early Season Results...

Big Ten decathlon champ Patrick Woods, an '09 grad from Ohio State, won the annual (and huge- 28 starters) Golden Flash heptathlon at Kent State University on Dec 12 with a 5432 score, 18 digits shy of the USATF indoor qualifying standard and 16 short of the Kent fieldhouse record. Red-shirt

Freshman Heath Nickles (Columbus Grove, OH) held on to grab 2nd place by 15 points (5253-5238). At the Jackson Open in Boise, ID, Grenada JC transfer Kurt Felix/Boise St, posted the highest early season collegiate mark, a NCAA provisional 5346. Complete results of the 8 December indoor meets are posted on our most recent Results Page.