

THE DECATHLON ASSOCIATION

DECA Newsletter

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INDOOR SEASON SLOGS ALONG Sam Adams - Funeral -Foundation

Hello Again.....As you know, Sam Adams, the dean of American decathlon coaches, passed away early this week. His obituary was the topic of the last *Newsletter*. Any number of California newspapers ran obits on Sam and chronicled his athletic/coaching career (see, for example, recent issues of *Santa Barbara Free Press* and *Santa Barbara Independent*).

Sam Adams Memorial Fund

A dedicated group of his former athletes, after discussing different options and knowing many of us would like to help, have set up The Sam Adams Memorial Fund at the Santa Barbara Bank and Trust.

The family is aware of the account and, in the next few weeks there will be some suggestions as to what the gift will be used for, for example, funeral expenses, gift to a T&F organization in Sam's name, etc.

In the next week please make any contribution you would like and make checks out to:

*Sam Adams Memorial Fund
(in the next week if possible)
and mail checks to: Ron & Kathy Wopat,
254 Sylvan Dr Goleta, CA 93117*

Memorial Service

Finally, a memorial service is slated for Saturday, January 23 at 11 a.m. at Trinity Episcopal Church, 1500 State Street in Santa Barbara (corner of State/Micheltoarena). Service 11-12, Reception 12:00-1:30 pm.

The format of the memorial service is limited to 3 speakers however the reception will have an open mike to share our sentiments and stories.

Finally, a wonderful article , written in 1973 by John Zant of the *SB Free-Press* (I reproduced it in my 1976 *Decathlon Guide*) is attached below.



The indoor combined events season consisted of half-a-dozen meets this past week/weekend. The most notable marks were posted by Wisconsin sophomore Dave Grzesiak (above_ who netted a fine 3922 pentathlon score in Madison, and by Montana State junior Asa Staven,(right) Georgetown, TX, who added 162 points to his PR while winning the Montana State Heptathlon in Bozeman with 5304 but just missing the NCAA provisional standard of 5325.



PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

by JOHN ZANT



Nakani Nakano

John Warkentin, one of Santa Barbara's "decathletes in residence," gets javelin tips from UCSB coach Sam Adams.

"They Call Me Coach!" would be positively malapropos as a title for the Sam Adams story. "They Call Me Sam" better indicates the relationship between athletes and the "guardian angel" of track and field at the University of California's Santa Barbara campus.

"The last time I called Sam 'coach' was when I was in high school," recalled decathlete Rory Kenward, a UCSB senior last year. "He's one of the finest friends a person can have."

"The most I've gotten out of track is a personal association with Sam Adams," said quartermiler Wayne Snyder.

"You hear this business from Jack Scott about how coaches take advantage of people... I can't relate that to Sam Adams," said veteran decathlete and former AAU champ John Warkentin, one of many off-campus athletes who have trained at UCSB and obtained generous assistance from Adams.

"Sam has done more for the decathlon than any other track and field coach in the United States, and he has received the least recognition," offered Dave Thoreson, another 10-event vet.

Said Harry Marra, another of Santa Barbara's decathletes-in-residence, "Living and training in Santa Barbara these past few years has been a very rewarding experience. Improvement in your events is nice, but even more rewarding is the idea of training together as a group of decathletes. And Sam Adams is probably the most knowledgeable decathlon coach in the US."

You get the idea that these athletes hold Adams in high esteem. Well, the feeling is mutual. Nobody has ever called track and field "coaches"; it's called athletics, and Adams' emphasis lies squarely on the athlete.

"The athletes make the sport," asserts Adams. "But you see competitions set up for television, meet producers, fans and last of all the athletes. The NCAA has become rich as a result of athletes, but you see legislation penalizing them and not coaches and institutions who commit bad deeds. Why don't they let athletics be for the athletes?"

Decathletes flock to the UCSB track for the 10-event competitions held there two or three times a year. They are intimate affairs, run with

loving care by Adams. He is the grounds crew, announcer, scorekeeper, adviser and sympathizer. Last spring, a decathlon unfolded at UCSB with utopian magnificence.

It was the first annual Santa Barbara "Decathlart," a combination decathlon and art show. The idea was for every competitor to display some artistic talent as well as compete. A new renaissance almost began. Athletes exhibited paintings, sculptures, carvings, jewelry, poetry and music. "I've never seen anything like it," said Warkentin, who won the decathlon but not the art show. "It was a lot of fun. We had a potluck picnic out on the field after the competition. That's something you just don't do."

Adams, who was talked into the idea by some of the athletes, brought his own metal sculpture to the track and spoke proudly of the event. "It shows people who don't appreciate athletics that athletes are not performing animals, but they're creative human beings," he said. "Then everybody, including the athlete, comes to realize that he is also an artist on the track. Form, rhythm—these are part of athletic as well as artistic endeavor."

"The reason the art show became a reality is that Sam is open-minded," said Gerry Moro, UCSB's assistant coach. "Yet he has a strong traditional sense in his coaching."

"Sam will drive you if he thinks you can handle it," said Kenward, who placed sixth in the 1973 NCAA decathlon. "The ethic of winning is very big with Sam. I attached less importance to it. That's the only difference we had between ourselves."

Adams delineates two functions of a coach if a young man is going to get anything out of athletics: "No. 1 is the individual... There are team ramifications here in college, but the individual must not be lost sight of... Second, the individual must not become dependent on you as a coach. He must develop self-sufficiency. I try to get an individual to understand his event enough to do it himself. Then I become a consultant rather than a coach... I hear other coaches say, 'I have won six track meets this year.' Well, he hasn't won anything. Anybody knows the individuals on the team were

responsible."

Adams' sense of individuality developed at UC Berkeley. He was an all-around athlete in Santa Ynez, a rural valley just over the hills from the Santa Barbara coastline. When he enrolled at Cal, he promptly went out for football. "My freshman year, I came down with what was probably mononucleosis," he relates. "Fever, Chills." Adams went to the man everybody called coach, and, "He chewed me out. I made up my mind to finish the season"—he was no quitter—"and that would be it for football."

In the spring of 1950, he found athletic harmony on the track under coach Brutus Hamilton, "a very ethical man." Before Adams' regular competitive career came to an end, he had placed in the NCAA javelin; been voted "outstanding track and field athlete" at Cal his senior year; set a decathlon world record in the discus throw (159-3½); become a 1956 US Olympic decathlon alternate despite losing his sharpness while in the service; and set a record for a single-day triple in the shot (53-3), javelin (229-8) and discus (157-0). He is one of the few decathletes whose score improved (from 6884 to 7106) under the new tables.

Adams became a UCSB assistant in 1959 and head coach in 1964. The Gauchos' track and field team was NCAA College Division runner-up in 1967 and 1968. "We had some fine people those years," he said. "But you don't have to get a national championship to feel successful." He seems to derive the most satisfaction out of watching athletes of modest talents improve—partly because of necessity (UCSB does not have the scholarship funds to attract blue-chippers), but greatly by choice (his biggest complaint about athletics is that "too many are looking for a handout... Philosophically, I can't say I agree with paying kids to perform for your school... I never pretended to be a good recruiter; I function best on the track.").

"I get more of a kick out of watching a guy develop than by keeping a world beater happy," says Adams. "There are thousands of guys who need encouragement—that's what athletics is all about; not the few internationalists with their special abilities under high stress. I don't want the

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guy at the lower end of the totem pole to feel inadequate and quit."

"Sam doesn't play favorites," said Warkentin. "It doesn't matter to him how good you are."

"He is willing to help out anybody who has the interest," said Snyder. "I consider myself pretty small potatoes, but with Sam's expertise, he got everything out of me one could get." Snyder, with just one year of high school track behind him, became a 47.2 one-lapper at UCSB. He ran the last half of his senior season with torn cartilage in his knee. "One of the all-time guts people," said Adams, who never pressured Snyder to run.

"I know I don't do a perfect job," admits Adams. "I just don't have enough hours. There are 50 guys on the team, I'm going to do my best

the AAU," claims Adams, noting that three or four athletes were taken in the jumps, intermediate hurdles and 1500. "They even paid the way of some athletes who went around Europe on their own to make money. How is a guy supposed to feel when he sits at home while somebody else gets on the team and doesn't even intend to compete in the meets? There's no incentive for our decathletes. They have just one international meet to look forward to (the USSR meet), and if you're not in the top two, forget it. With just four men competing over there, it's not a decathlon; it's an exhibition. If the AAU wants to improve our status in the decathlon, it should send our top six men to Europe."

Adams tried to gain support for just such a venture after the AAU meet, but he got the

person in the US to being a national decathlon coach," also notes the NCAA's poor handling of the 10-event competition for the World University Games: "The trials were virtually a secret meet. Four guys were invited, and only two completed the decathlon."

He believes a restructured, revitalized club system could greatly enhance the opportunities for track and field competition in the US, especially during the dead summer months: "The clubs would be local and compete in dual meets. The present clubs in this country are ridiculous. They go for the elite few, and there's nothing for the ordinary Joe Blow like in Europe."

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"I know I don't do a perfect job," admits Adams. "I just don't have enough hours. There are 50 guys on the team, I'm going to do my best but . . . they have to make an effort to relate to me too."

"If a guy doesn't show up for practice, Sam won't chase him down," said Snyder. "If you aren't interested, he's not going to waste your time and his. He's willing to give all he can, but he expects the athlete to motivate himself."

Warkentin will testify to Adams' unstinted efforts on behalf of athletes. "Sam made it possible for me to go to Europe this summer," said the veteran decathlete. It all began when Warkentin staggered from a possible second place to sixth in the eternal, agonizing minute it took him to finish the final 25 yards of the 1500 in the AAU Decathlon Championships.

"It said on the original entry blank that five decathlon men would qualify for international competition," says Adams, who expected Warkentin to be included because of his solid performance up to the 1:00 a.m. calamity. But only one-two finishers Jeff Bennett and Steve Gough were awarded spots on the US team.

"The decathlon is getting short shrift from

the AAU," claims Adams, noting that three of four athletes were taken in the jumps, intermediate hurdles and 1500. "They even paid the way of some athletes who went around Europe on their own to make money. How is a guy supposed to feel when he sits at home while somebody else gets on the team and doesn't even intend to compete in the meets? There's no incentive for our decathletes. They have just one international meet to look forward to (the USSR meet), and if you're not in the top two, forget it. With just four men competing over there, it's not a decathlon; it's an exhibition. If the AAU wants to improve our status in the decathlon, it should send our top six men to Europe."

Adams tried to gain support for just such a venture after the AAU meet, but he got the answer that no funds were available. So he concentrated on sending Warkentin abroad, finding him a place in the Swiss Decathlon Championships and securing private donations. John won the Swiss event and competed in another decathlon in West Germany. The AAU had nothing to do with his tour.

Next summer, says Adams, it will be time for the AAU to either boost or scuttle the nation's decathlon hopes. He sees opportunities for the US to compete with European countries in team decathlon competitions—five-man teams competing with the top four scores counting. "I know that Germany, Switzerland and Sweden are very interested," said Warkentin, who checked it.

"The AAU is the logical body to pursue this thing and make arrangements," says Adams. "They say they're interested in promoting the decathlon because our image suffered in Munich. We'll see . . . In 1971 Rumania invited the US to send five decathletes to compete in a team meet, but the AAU did nothing about it."

Adams, whom Warkentin calls "the closest

person in the US to being a legitimate decathlon coach," also notes the NCAA's poor handling of the 10-event competition for the World University Games: "The trials were virtually a secret meet. Four guys were invited, and only two completed the decathlon."

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Sam Adams pauses and spikes a javelin into the ground. "What it amounts to," he says, "is that people have to start giving a damn about track and field. Now they only give a damn about themselves—the powers-that-be, and a few athletes who should be putting something back into the sport."

Adams has been talking in the middle of the UCSB oval, his favorite spot on this earth. He has watched, and continues to watch, young people grow stronger and faster there. Now he is trying to preserve those qualities in himself, as he trains for a seniors decathlon.

He has been called a "Spartan" and a "purist," and he looks it. He is 6-0 and 182 pounds, a few pounds lighter than his best competitive weight in college. At an all-comers meet recently, he hurled the big discus 157-11, very close to his PR set 19 years ago.

Now he gazes around the track—every building of the surrounding UCSB campus blocked out by a curtain of trees—and says, "Give these things some more time, and we might have a dome here."

The Eucalyptus Dome. A fitting place for Sam and track and field. □