

TWO FORMER STARS PASS AWAY.... Walde, Brigham Die Within Days

Hello Again....The decathlon nation is saddened as word came today of the deaths of a pair of iconic decathlon world figures from the 1960s and 1970s. Two time Olympic medalist from Germany, Hans Joachim Walde, and and world ranked American, Craig Brigham died within days of one another. Ironically both became physicians in post decathlon years.

I knew both and it's the reason I hate writing obituaries.

Hans-Joachim Walde, MD (born 28 June 1942; died 18 April 2013 in Jever) was a West German decathlon star who competed in three Olympic Games, medaled twice and was world ranked on 5 occasions.

A product of legendary coach Friedel Schirmer, Walde won the bronze medal at the 1964 Tokyo Games behind teammate Willi Holdorf. Both represented the "unified" team from Germany. He was 1967 World University Games champion, then, representing "West" Germany he captured the silver medal at the 1969 Olympic Games in Mexico City behind Bill Toomey. He failed to finish the 1972 Games in Munich. He competed for the club USC Mainz, was world ranked in 1963-64-67-68-71, and had a PR score was 8122 ('62 tables) and 8094 ('85 tables). Walde completed 30 of 35 career meets. In 1982 Walde was the chief of delegation for the USA vs Germany dual match in Baton Rouge, LA.

He made his home in Bomlitz. In his last years Walde was the director of sports



Recent photos of Hans Joachim Walde (left) who died on April 18th in Jeter, GER, and Craig Brigham (right) who died on April 22 in Charlotte, NC. Both were physicians.

medicine at Northwest hospital in Frisian Sande, Lower Saxony

Craig Brigham, MD, (born May 6, 1954, died April 22, 2013 in Charlotte, NC), was a University of Oregon star who won three Pac-8 decathlon titles, was world ranked 9th in 1975, a year in which he was NCAA runner-up, and 13th and 8th at two US Olympic Trials. He held the national high school record for 37 years until broken by Curtis Beach in 2009.

Brigham was an outstanding prep gymnast where he was the Oregon state champion in floor exercise and the high bar. He was a 10-6 pole vaulter as a sixth grader. He was coached by Harry Johnson at South Eugene HS and Bill Bowerman and Frank Morris at Oregon. Brigham was *Track and Field News* Prep Athlete of the year in 1972.

He was a member of the world record five-man USA decathlon team which

pasted the Soviet Union and Poland in 1975, (Jenner, Dixon, Samara and Gough the others). For the statistically conscious, he had a career best of 8027 points (7934 on present tables). He finished 23 of 25 career meets, made three USA international teams and was nationally ranked on four occasions.

He earned a medical degree from Northwestern University and was an orthopaedic surgeon in Charlotte, NC. He was 58, found dead outside his Charlotte apartment and the cause of death was natural

Brigham was a surgeon at the Spine Center, part of OrthoCarolina, a large orthopedics practice based in Charlotte. He had specialized in spine surgery since 1988 and was also chief of spine education for the Carolinas Medical Center residency program.

He had recently said...“my strength as a physician comes from my ability to work hard, to concentrate for long periods, and to keep plugging away,” he said. “Those strengths can be attributed partly to my nature, but they are also the result of my athletic training. Athletics taught me discipline, focus, and how to stick with something.”

He failed to make the USA Olympic team in 1976, while recovering from mononucleosis that he had contracted earlier in the year. He requested a two year absence from medical school to train for the 1980 Olympic team and competed for Athletics West in Eugene. Any chance for the 1980 team evaporated with the Carter USA Olympic boycott.

He was never bitter. “I supported it (boycott),” he said. “I always felt that participating in the Olympics was a privilege and I still feel that way, but my main motivation for competing was the personal challenge it represented.” It’s that sense of challenge that also motivated Brigham to become an orthopaedic surgeon. “I didn’t

always want to be a doctor,” he said. “I was a good student and went to medical school because it was a challenge. It was during my plastic surgery rotation that I realized I wanted to be a surgeon, and my athletic background pushed me in the direction of orthopaedic surgery.”



Walde (left), a big man at 6-3, 209, led the Mexico City 1500 meters into the last lap trying to make up a points gap on Bill Toomey (center). Toomey ran him down, easily winning the race and the gold medal. Behind Toomey are Soviet teenager Nikolay Avilov (who was 4th) and German Kurt Bendlin (3rd).



Brigham too, was a big chap, at 6-1, 200, here competing at Hayward Field for the Axeman of South Eugene HS. He was one of the event’s best straddle high jumpers with a 6-10¾ career best.

Career bests

Walde: 10.97 7.64m/25-¾ 15.71m/51-6½
 2.01m/6-7 49.03 14.87 48.56m/159-3
 4.30m/14-1¼ 71.62m/235-0 4:31.9
Brigham: 11.01 7.02m/23-½ 16.06m/52-8¼
 2.10m/6-10¾ 50.1h 15.06 49.78m/163-4
 4.95m/16-2¾ 67.24m/220-7 4:35.3.