

OLYMPIC CHEATING, OBITS, JOs Badminton Scandal Mirrors 1906 Pentathlon

Hello Again... This final newsletter before the 23rd Olympic decathlon covers a sundry bag decathlon issues.

First, in light of yesterday's Badminton cheating scandal in London, we offer a century old and similiar combined events situation that went overlooked and disregarded at the time. Second, two obituaries review decathlon related deaths. And finally, the recent national Junior Olympic meets are appraised.

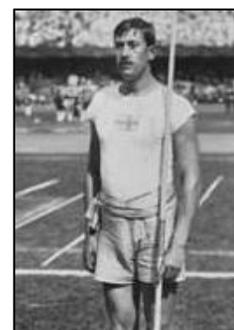
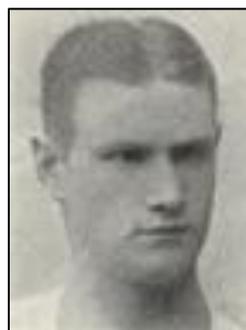
The Badminton Cheating Scandal

On August 1, 2012 the Badminton World Federation (BWF) disqualified 8 players for match-fixing, a widespread sport tactic. The London Games was the first attempt to address the issue in a public way. Because London was the first time qualifying rounds were necessary (instead of all-elimination play) athletes obviously threw matches to gain favorable draws in later rounds. The poor play was so blantant that they drew repeated warnings from officials and angry fans booed the athletes at Wembly Arena. The dq'd players were from China, Indonesia and South Korea.

The badminton incident reminds me of the manipulation of the outcome at the very first modern Olympics combined event contest, a pentathlon (spelled "Pentathlum" in 1906) at the 1906 Intercalated Games in Athens. This condensed version here is taken from my forthcoming book, *The Pentathlon of*

the Ancient World, Frank Zarnowski, McFarland Publishing, Jefferson, NC, 2012.

The 1906 Athens pentathlon, modeled after the ancient pentathlon (discus, standing long jump, javelin, stade and wrtestling), drew a field of 26 athletes from eleven nations including American favorite Martin Sheridan, 25, the discus world record holder and Sweden's Eric Lemming, 26, the world record



Sweden's Hjalmer Mellander (left) is listed as the 1906 Athens pentathlon winner. He had a bit of wrestling help from teammate Eric Lemming (right).

holder in the javelin.

A successive elimination and naïve point system was in place. Athletes earned 1 point for first place, 2 points for second place and so on, low tally wins. This resulted in manipulation of the final results by a pair of Swedish athletes. What is more surprising is that it was not controversial at the time.

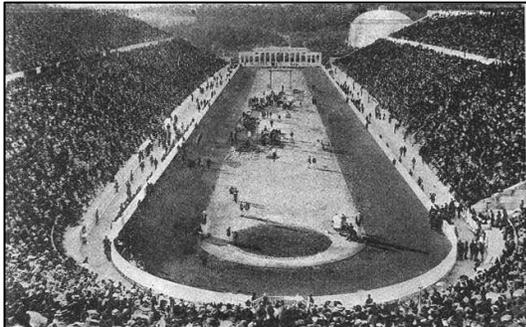
All 26 entrants competed in the first three events, but Sheridan injured himself in the jump and limped away. His injury opened the door to Lemming, Swedish teammate

Hjalmer Mellander and bulky Hungarian István Mudin, 6-3, 220.

After three events all but the top eight scorers were dropped. At the end of four events the scores stood:

Mellander	SWE	21 points,
Mudin	HUN	24 points,
Lemming	SWE	25 points,

and the top six now advanced to the *skamma* to wrestle in round robin format.



The 1906 Pan Olympic Stadium in Athens is still in existence.

The huge Mudin was a certain winner here and his one point was sure to make his final tally 25 points. Lemming, who already had 25 points and could not win the overall title, was ironically, paired with Mellander in the very last wrestling match which would determine the wrestling event's 3rd and 4th places. Close observers may have noticed that the taller and stronger Lemming (he was 6-3, 194 and outweighed the smaller Mellander by 40 pounds!) did not seem to try very hard and the bout went to his 25 years old Mellander who thus earned three points for third place in the event and won the ancient pentathlon, its first Olympic victor in 14 centuries. *Nike*. Final scores:

Hjalmer Mellander	SWE	24 points
István Mudin	HUN	25 points
Erik Lemming	SWE	29 points

A year later Swedish magazine accounts reported that the pair of Swedes faked the final wrestling match to allow Mellander to win. Both readily disclosed as

much. There were no charges of chicanery, no investigation, no hearings, no disqualification, no fines. No big deal. Olympic historians, perhaps unwilling or unable to unravel the scoring morass, appear to be completely unaware of the issue.

This is not a condemnation on my part. It is simply a contrast of two eras. For his part Lemming may have been lauded (at least in Sweden) for his sportsmanship. 1906 was not 2012, and like 8 badminton players in London, identical actions today would create a rumpus.

Please note, for historical accuracy, the 1906 Athens pentathlon was the first modern CE at the modern Games. The 1904 AAU All-Around meet in St. Louis has now conclusively been shown NOT to have been an Olympic event and the IOC made an error in the 1960s by including that event in its Olympic records. The evidence is irrefutable and overwhelming in spite of a few historians who have not investigated the same. A complete review of both incidents is provided in my forthcoming book mentioned above.

Obituaries:

Gore Vidal...1926-2012

Celebrated and controversial writer Gore Vidal died on Tuesday, July 31, at his home in Hollywood Hills, CA from



Gore Vidal (left) and famous decathlete father Gene Vidal on the cover of Time magazine,

complications from pneumonia. He was, in a very real sense, America's first man of letters, irreverent, witty and insightful. Known for his urbanity and humor-----"every time a friend

succeeds, I die a little,” or “a narcissist is someone better looking than you are,” few realized his connection to our sport.

Born at West Point, NY in 1926 where his father, Gene, was an aeronautical instructor, Gore Vidal was never an athlete. But his father was an Olympic decathlete (7th at 1920 Antwerp Games), and the USA Olympic decathlon coach in 1924 when Americans (Harold Osborn and Emerson Norton) won the gold and silver decathlon medals in Paris. Later he would be a dominant figure in the emerging field of flight, served in the FDR Administration, and made the cover



Gene Vidal, 23, was one of the nation's top running backs in 1918.

of *Time* magazine. He also got away with one of the great cons in amateur sports history. Just a decade after Jim Thorpe had been stripped of his Olympic medals and records for playing “professional ball” Gene Vidal was able to play in the National Football League (in 1922 for the precursor of the Redskins, the Washington Pros, no less), and then retain his amateur standing and compete the following season at the national AAU decathlon as an amateur. How he was able to get away with this has never been explained. My suspicion is that Thorpe was an easy target, someone who

could be made an example of. But no one was willing to take on a faculty member at the US Military Academy. The Carlisle Indian School was one thing, the US Army was a whole other matter.

Gene Vidal also had two distinct college football careers, graduating from the University of South Dakota in 1916 where he was a notable running back. He then enlisted in the US Army for WW I but was sent to West Point who did not hesitate to use him in their backfield for another 4 seasons. He graduated from the US Military Academy, at age 25, in 1920.

As a decathlete he was twice world and US ranked, with a PR score of 6461.580 (1920 Tables) in 1922. His decathlon career is outlined in my 2002 book, *American Decathletes: a 29th century Who's Who*, (McFarland Publishing, Jefferson, NC). His PRs (remember, this was 1920) included: 12.0, 6.41m/21-½, 11.15m/36-7, 1.83m/6-0, 53.8, 17.1, 37.30m/122-4, 3.35m/10-11¾, 37.85m/124-2, 4:30.6.

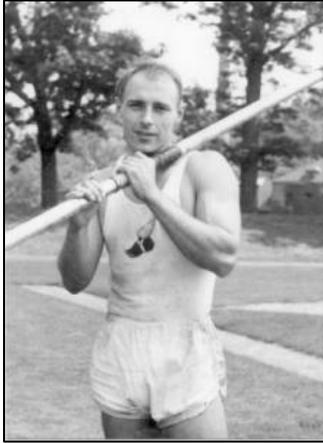
Gene Vidal (who maintained a brief romantic relationship with Amelia Earhart) and his son Gore may have belonged to the most politically connected American family of the 20th century. Gore's grandfather, was blind Oklahoma senator Thomas Pryor Gore for whom he was named. Gene was the great uncle to former president Al Gore. Gene was divorced in 1935 and his first wife subsequently married Hugh D. Auchincloss, stepfather to former first lady, Mrs. John F. (Jacqueline Onassis) Kennedy. Gene was also the uncle to former president Jimmy Carter. His decathlon career paled in comparison. Gene Vidal died in Los Angeles in 1969.

Charlie Stevenson...1930-2012.

Charlie Stevenson, a former decathlete who once held several age group world records, died of a heart attack on July 12.

Stevenson (5-9, 163 lbs) made his reputation in the old AAU all-around, a single day, ten event contest that predated and morphed into the decathlon in the early days of

the 20th century. At national AAU all-arounds in the 1950s and '60s Stevenson won 2 golds, six silvers and one bronze medal in a lengthy career. When the event was discontinued by the AAU in 1979 he still was the # 3 all-time performer, and one of three men ever to break the 8000 point barrier.



Stevenson's work ethic and desire to perpetually stay in shape were legendary. While at NYU he once entered three intramural wrestling weight classes on the same day, winning 6 of 7

matches and two of the divisions. During a two year stint in the Marine Corps he set obstacle course records at Parris Island, NC, Quantico, VA and Camp Pendleton, CA. Stevenson once broke *into* the US Military Academy Field House just to get a work out in. For over 4 decades he trained relentlessly, smoked at least one pack of cigarettes a day and had his obligatory heart attack, at age 62, in 1992.

He graduated from Bronxville HS, was 'invited to leave' Springfield College for poor grades, and made a reputation at both NYU and the New York Athletic Club as a pole vaulter and all-around athlete.

In 1955 he was the AAU all-around runner up in Baltimore, and might have won the contest had he not, on the day before, run up the 897 steps of the 555 foot Washington Monument. He won the 1956 and 1960 national AAU titles and scored 8031 points at the national meet in 1963.

He was philosophical about his 1992 heart attack. "What do you expect from a guy who believes the four food groups are donuts, hot dogs, coffee and cigarettes?"



Professionally he was a computer programmer and analyst for numerous major firms. He lived in Scarsdale, NY with wife and several adopted children. Stevenson was 82.

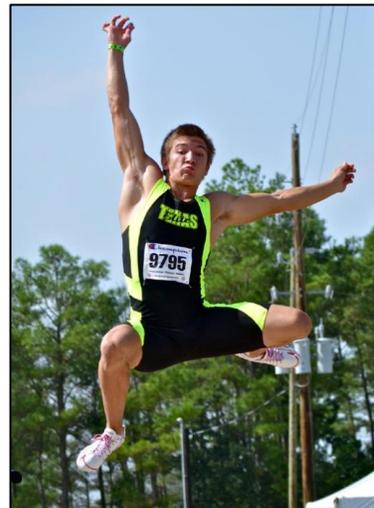
For those statistically conscious, his all-around event PRs were:

100 yds:	10.5	120yd H:	16.8
880yd walk:	3:02	Mile:	5:15.8
LJ:	23-0	HJ:	6-0
PV:	14-3	SP:	40-1
Hammer:	160-0	56lb wt:	29-4½

He may have been the lightest person ever to throw his weight in the hammer. A biography of Stevenson was part of my: *All-Around Men: Heroes of a Forgotten Sport*, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD, 2005.

----- Junior Olympics...

The Junior Olympic season concluded this



week with a dominating performance at the AAU JO nationals in Humble, TX by 17 year old Wolf Mahler, (left), a rising senior at Belton, TX. His 7247 winning total

was a 300 point PR as he won by nearly 1100 points in the young men (17-18) division. At the same division at the USATF JOs nationals in Baltimore, Scott Filip/DuPage TC was a winner with a 6727 score. The AAU meet also had the higher scoring "intermediate buys"

division, a 6400 score by Harrison Williams, Memphis, TN.

National Junior Olympic Results:

7/23-24 USATF Junior Olympics, Morgan St U, Baltimore, MD

[Young men 17-18]

6727 Filip, Scott/Dupage TC '95 11.16-0.1
700-1.2 1362 195 51.27 15.87+0.8 3661 365 4621 5:16.14
6405 Wayda, George/unat '94 11.91+0.1
607+1.9 1402 170 52.94 15.65+0.4 3984 410 4568 4:57.92
6294 Modin, Mitch/C Ore RC '95 11.44-0.1
633+0.3 1199 190 50.65 16.32+0.8 3285 320 4305 4:44.11
6189 Johnson, Timmy/Willamette Str '95 11.62-0.1
666 0.0 1243 175 51.94 16.54+0.8 3476 365 4279 5:02.63
6150 Zebold, Grant/Millennium ExpressTC '95 11.08-0.1
651+2.0 1113 175 51.55 14.79+2.0 2565 335 4186 5:00.87
6029 Dougherty, William/unat '95 11.74-0.1
615-0.6 1247 170 50.90 15.87+0.4 3644 260 3774 4:30.52
5912 Beekman, Brad/unat '94, 5891 Black,
Royal/Willamette St '95, 5830 Golubovic, Dan/unat '95, 5751
Koch,
Shawn/Dupage TC '95, 5722 Honea, Ben/unat '95.
5695 Shea, Kevin/Granite St Flash '94, 5655 Mercer,
Robert/Glenarden TC '94, 5611 Yeager, Dan/Fox
Athletics '94, 5554 Kruse, James/Team Woodbury '95 5499
Conrad,
Eric/Aoc Ambler TC, 5413 Divine, Brooks/unat, 5406
Johnson, Rodney/Noprfolk RD TC '94, 5240 Kinsey,
Gaines/Club
Vault '94, 5077 Kruer, Zak/unat '94, 5069 Segovia,
David/RichmondTC '95, 25s,23f.

[Intermediate Boys, 15-16]

6377 Lint, John/Flying Js '96 11.66-0.2
619-0.3 1141 185 51.74 14.88+1.1 3136 405 3539 4:38.30
6105 Williams, Harrison/unat '96 11.88-0.3
599-0.4 1170 180 52.99 15.95+2.5 3489 375 3990 4:43.19
6038 Henshaw, Liam/Willamette St '96 11.70-0.2
593-0.7 1197 190 54.90 16.07+2.8 3674 360 3961 4:59.14
5700 Fox, Eric/unat '96, 5544 Walashek,
Austin/Arizona Puma '96. 5150 Armstrong, Kalis/Sapphire
Ruff Riders '96,
5117 Vaughan, Paris/Team Networking '96, 5042
Burns, James/Cts TC '96, 18s,18f.

7/28-29 National AAU Junior Olympics, Humble, TX

[Young men: 17-18]

7274 Mahler, Wolf/Temple, TX 11.13+0.3 613nwi
1409 177 49.76 15.30-1.1 4502 440 5228 4:32.02
6175 Williams, Devon/Kennesaw, GA 11.49 0.0 649nwi
1315 177 52.56 14.68-1.1 3156 305 4508 5:14.65
5906 Wasik, Steele/Medina/OH, 5891 Hawkins,
Chaz/Franklin, TN, 5787 Austin, Quentin/Vandalia, IL, 5685
Billings,
Austin/Brentwood, TN, 5613 Mitchell,
Daron/Lithonia, GA, 5686 Audet, Kyle/Coral Spgs, FL, 5458
Jeffers, Nathan
/Jacksonville, FL, 5453 Gapinski, Zach/Zionsvile, IN,
5453 Clopine, Steven/Kansas City, MO, 5422 Haese,
Ryan/San
Antonio, TX, 5342 Thwing, Joe/Davison, MI, 5317
Keller, Stephen/Kouts, IN, 5243 Jackson, Jordan/Kennesaw,
GA,

5235 Charles, Chris/Nashville, TN, 35s,32f.

[Intermediate Boys, 15-16]

6400 Williams, Harrison/Memphis, TN 11.72 0.0 624nwi
1137 191 51.39 15.64+1.8 3240 395 4082 4:41.95
6393 Moore, Gabriel/Freeport, FL 11.51 0.0 637nwi
1313 182 50.93 16.46+1.3 3726 335 4532 4:48.32
6013 Toliver, Travis/Cypress, TX 11.90 0.0 563nwi
1259 167 55.16 15.84+2.0 3378 425 5112 5:11.13
5028 Fox, Philip/Washington, IL, 38s,32f.