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REX HARVEY PASSES

Sport's Lone 'Million Career Point Man' Dead at 73

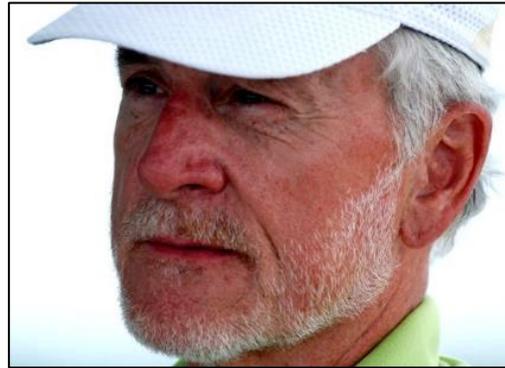
Hello Again....I hate writing obituaries. Recently it's become all too common, and it's the only disagreeable thing about keeping track of our sport.

Rex Harvey
1946-2019

On Sunday, December 22 Rex Harvey, America's premier decathlon official and it's only *million career point man* died of a massive heart attack in Prescott, Arizona. He had endured the flu many caught at the USATF annual convention in Reno. He suffered a massive heart attack in Prescott, where he was recovering from appendix cancer. Harvey was 73.

USATF CEO Max Siegel said "Rex's passing is a tremendous loss for the organization. His unwavering passion and tireless commitment were evident in every aspect of the sport that he touched. Our thoughts are with his family."

What do I remember about Rex Harvey? God, what don't I remember? Rex was a national class decathlete in the early 1970s and, even though the Air Force stationed him everywhere and anywhere, faithfully came to one of my meets in Emmitsburg, MD annually. I followed his career which was notable not just for its quality performances, but the sheer quantity of meets he did...something highly unusual for CEs. While others might start in say 2 or 3 or



Rex Harvey, the USA's premier CE official, died recently in Prescott, AZ. He was 73.

perhaps 4 decathlons a year, Rex would do nine, ten..... in one year (1976) he finished an ungodly dozen decathlons. Rex contested ten-eventers in half of the states, ten countries and on five continents. He was the sport's Marco Polo, traveling his entire adult life either contesting or officiating decathlons.



Harvey's signature event was the pole vault. He has had a career best of 16 feet. Here a clearance as an Iowa State senior (1969).

He started his first decathlon in May 1965, while an Iowa State freshman. By 2000 he had started 114 decathlons and finished 110 (96.1%). Being an Air Force officer gave him many travel opportunities and he literally toured the world contesting decathlons. He was a man for all seasons: spring meets in Santa Maria, summer meets in Walnut, fall affairs in Bloomington and winter meets in Glendale. It seemed, that, for more than a dozen years, Rex was always at the starting line.

In 2002, when I published *American Decathletes: a 20th Century Who's Who*, Jefferson, NC, McFarland Publishers, with career records of the nation's top decathlons, Rex's entry took up *four* pages! He was hard to keep up with, for he travelled so much. When his national class career wound-down



Harvey completed nearly 170 (!) career decathlons, a record unlikely to be surpassed.

he never stopped competing and entered Master's competitions shattering veterans' records. He held age group records for nine ages and won 13 national veterans titles. He started at least one decathlon for 30 (!) consecutive years.

When the dust cleared Rex had finished over 170 career decathlons, far in excess of whoever was/is in 2nd place. A world record! (that's 1700 events!). I stopped counting after my book went to press in 2000. He was so healthy and active that we had to (collectively) create a new category of records

for Rex's longevity....career meets, career points, length of time from first to final meet...and so on. In one ten (!) year stretch he was on the track doing a decathlon one day out of every twenty. Compared to Rex ultra-marathoners had it easy. To this day he is history's lone one million career points man. His records were his trophies.

What do I recall about Rex.....? When I once announced at a USA/Russia/Canada tri decathlon in Bloomington, IN (1977 I believe) that if Rex's next javelin would land fair, he would move into the all-time lead in career points, the collective audience, including Sen. Richard Lugar seated on my right, appreciably cheered.

Rex was not the top decathlete of his era....that appellation belonged to guys named Jenner, Dixon, Samara, Coffman, Warkentin and others. But he managed to marginally achieve national class status. He qualified for 8 nationals (AAU & TAC) and competed in the 1976 US Olympic Trials (13th) and represented the US in several internationals. He was the world military (CISM) champion and was a staple at the Drake Relays competing there 19 times. Rex was Kip Janvrin's durability inspiration. Although their careers barely overlapped they competed in five Drake Relay's together. His lifetime PRs just missed 8000 points....7634 on '62 tables, 7451 on the present rubric. If you have to know: [10.4h 7.08/23-2³/₄ 14.24m/47-³/₄ 1.89/6-2¹/₄ 48.1 15.60 44.14m/144-10 4.87m+/16-0 55.48m/182-0 4:30.7]

He was, like myself, a man of numbers. An engineer by profession, he appreciated record keeping and even went to excess. The pole vault was his favorite event (PR =16 feet) and he once told me that he vaulted higher than any man in history if one measures the cumulative heights of every bar ever cleared (in practice and meets). He kept track and estimated his career height in *miles*. "Half-way to the moon," was his sheepish

way of expressing it. *For reference, one mile would be 352 fifteen-foot clearances.*

He also had a serious side and was a stickler for promoting CEs and a stickler for observing its rules. His post competitive career accomplishments included encouraging others to join the decathlon wars (another



Rex was the nation's top CE official for three decades.

Iowan, Kip Janvrin, was a prize draftee) and his officiating.

The *Des Moines Register* related that when Kip won his first Drake title, he gave the watch to his mother. The second went to his grandmother. The third went to Rex, who had never won a Drake Relays decathlon, but was ever present.

Rex became a Master official and the nation's best, and best-known CE official of the last thirty years. I am sure that many of today's top American decathletes have been unaware of Rex's presence/influence at major meets, ala the US Olympic Trials and USATF and NCAA championships. No other USA CE official was as effective as Rex. He both understood CEs (because he had been so competitively active) and understood the rules (because he wrote them). Although unobtrusive, he was omni-present. In later years he promoted veteran's competitions and most recently he was chair of the USA Masters T&F Committee.

A few years back I convinced him to come to the Hypo-Bank meet in Götzis, Austria, just to see the way the meet was conducted. He came away impressed. But so also did the European coaches and athletes who wanted to meet *him*, "the million-point man." I introduced him to Roman Sebrle, then the world decathlon record-holder and was the fly on the wall as the world record holders for score and career scores conversed.

Rex Harvey was born in Dexter, IA on July 6, 1946. He graduated from Iowa State University in 1969, (engineering degree and AFROTC). He was commissioned and, for most of his national class career, was an Air Force officer (Captain). As chief engineer for



Parker-Hannifin Corp, he held eleven patents. With a track and field career that spanned more than half of a century, a litany of his contributions would be endless. Suffice to say that our sport needs guys like Rex. Indeed we were lucky to have him in our midst. He'll be deeply missed.

*Frank Zarnowski
December 23, 2109
Emmitsburg, MD*