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GO LIKE NEVER BEFORE.



from the editor

E. Gary Hill

AS A GUY WHO WEIGHED all of 140 pounds (my detractors say I still weigh 140, except that now it’s kilos) and was ostensibly a triple jumper when he graduated from high school I’m not sure how I came to have such an attraction for the throws. I mean, all events are equally great to me, but somehow the throws are even more equal.

The overall U.S. throws picture on the men’s side, however, hasn’t been a pretty one in the last decade-plus. To be sure, the putters are hanging in there, but the discus (see Mac Wilkins story on p. 15), hammer and javelin performers haven’t been picking up a lot of international hardware. The last OG/WC medal in the disc dates to ’99, the hammer to ’96 and the javelin to ’07.

**Hang in there,
U.S. throwers—the
Foundation cavalry
is on the way!**

Enter an unsung hero in the person of Mark James. You don’t know him as an athlete, coach or official. No, he’s something the sport doesn’t have remotely enough of, and that’s being a die-hard *fan*. And in particular, a fan of the throws. Whooda thunk?

James, a former Nevada State Senator, got hooked on our sport in general—and the throws in particular—as a kid at the hallowed ground of Hayward Field. His father John was an Oregon alum. And when Mark joined the USATF Foundation (a whole group of unsung heroes who don’t get nearly enough recognition/praise for their good works for the sport), he created the John W. James Endowment in July of 2010, seeding it with \$200,000.

Said James fils at the time, “My dad was the biggest track fan I ever knew, but he always wished that his favorite events—the shot put, discus, hammer and javelin—would be featured more at big meets. Although he is gone, this endowment is an effort to make that wish come true.”

In ’13, 16 throwers received grants totalling \$54,000, and at a January Foundation get-together at James’s Las Vegas home, where I was honored to be a guest, James added \$75,000 into the fund. It was a grand affair, with Wilkins and arch-rival John Powell making a good show of being best-buds and each being treated with due awe by current U.S. champ Lance Brooks. The hammer community was well represented by Foundation member Ken Flax and current athletes Amanda Bingson and Britney Henry.

Bingson, a relatively low-profile collegian who got Foundation support and went on to twice break the American Record last year, reacted by saying, “It is because of the support from the Foundation that I can call myself the recordholder. Thank you so much.” A lot of athletes/clubs owe thanks to the foundation, which despite its name, isn’t actually related to the national federation.

Executive Director Tom Jackovic notes that his group has disbursed some \$2,000,000 in grants since ’07. All the awards are wonderful, of course, but for me the James-funded throws ones remain special, because this is an aspect of the sport that has become somewhat orphaned in the U.S., from the collegiate level on up.

I fear that too many schools are interested in burning their limited number of scholarships on runners/jumpers who can do multiple event duty and run on relays. Why waste time on single-event throwers, especially when it requires high-end technical specialists?

And the gear companies, whose sponsorship money keeps so many athletes alive, are primarily interested only in runners whose exploits will sell shoes to the masses.

Finally, I can’t shake the feeling that USATF and the USOC, with their fixation on Olympic/World Champs podium appearances, are far more interested in keeping the sprint/relay medals flowing without stopping to think that there aren’t 30 medals available in just those events.

So, for now, listen for the trumpet as the Foundation cavalry charges over the hill.