



from the editor

E. Garry Hill

“THE YEAR OF THE HIGH JUMP.” After the antics of Messrs. Bondarenko, Barshim, Ukhov, et al, last year, 2014 indeed became tagged as the year of the vertical leap.

Piggybacking off that phenomenon, 2015 is already popularly becoming known as The Year Of The Pole Vault (#YearoftheVault in Twitterese). And with good reason, as many pieces of this edition of *T&FN* lay out for you.

Is there a way to transfer the magic of the vertical jumps to the other field events?

But here’s a puzzler for you. Can you imagine any other field event having a year named after it?

Any number of running events could easily be afforded such a monicker, particularly in the modern e-world, where hashtagging things is all the rage. Year Of The 100, Year Of The Mile, Year Of The Marathon, etc.; all carry enough gravitas that you could imagine

it happening. But not any of the throws or the horizontal jumps.

One of the prime reasons the HJ and PV have reached such lofty status is because some incredible athletes have been putting up marks high in the stratosphere. And everybody loves record chases.

But records, typically few and far between, are becoming fewer and farther as the years go by. Nonetheless, the vertical jumps, generally speaking, remain among the most popular of events, and certainly dominate the jumps and throws. Is there a way to transfer the magic of the verticals to other field events?

I think there is. Perhaps the prime reason for the popularity of the HJ and PV is that they satisfy the fans’ primal need for “instant gratification.” No waiting around for a cumbersome—and often interminable—measurement of the distance and the announcement thereof. No, a split second after takeoff you know if the athlete has been successful or not.

Allow me to suggest that a similar system could—and *should*—be put in play for the other jumps and throws. Particularly in the biggest of meets, where the availability of modern technology would make it fairly simple.

Let’s hypothesize an Olympic or World Champs men’s shot final (where in a perfect field, by the way, we’d have fewer than the cumbersome dozen finalists we’re now saddled with, but I digress). A laser scribes an arc on the field at 20-meters (65-7½). Just like the verticals, you’ve got 3 chances to cross the line (or you can, of course, pass). Make it you’re in; miss and you’re out. Then on to 20.50 (67-¾), 21.00 (68-10¾), 21.50 (70-6½), 22.00 (72-2¼), etc, etc.

The field shrinks as you go, with the fans having a reason to cheer/jeer for each and every attempt. And isn’t that what it’s all about? Meanwhile, there’s nothing to prevent having each throw/jump measured, so the traditional yearly lists—and actual records of any sort—don’t go by the wayside.

The measuring also affords the opportunity to use best mark as a tie-breaker, should the jumpers/throwers end up equal at the point where they have all maxed out. In gh-world, I’d then say a classic tie-breaking set of attempts should be instituted, but if the athletes don’t want to go again, then the measured marks come into play. This, of course, would always find the performer with the second-best mark forcing the situation for more attempts. Just another layer of drama that would do nothing but good for the sport.

While I wax rhapsodic about the verticals, allow me to vent mightily against frequent suggestions that the sport could be “improved” by restricting athletes to 2 attempts, or to just a fixed number like 6 overall. Fans are wowed by every attempt in the HJ or PV. If the rules are to be changed, it should be so that performers get *more* attempts—like 4—at every height.

I don’t disagree that the sport overall needs streamlining, but eliminating some of the most compelling bits of drama certainly isn’t the way to go.

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