

## The Expanding Twenties

Expansion was the word for the Drake Relays in the 1920's. By 1922, the meet had expanded to two days with 34 events, including nine for individual collegians. It was a decade in which 30 schools with a geographic spread from Southern California to Army won individual titles, and a pole vaulter from Norway brought out a record crowd on a 48° day.

Crowds were bigger throughout the era. In 1920, many street cars were added on University and Clark runs to get 6,000 spectators to the field. By 1928, 14,000 saw the Saturday events.

It was a decade that saw six world's records and nine American marks bettered. Illinois was by far the dominant team, winning 22 of 53 relays and 14 individual titles. Kansas and Nebraska, with nine and eight individual event wins respectively, were runners-up. In relay wins, the University of Iowa was second with 10, and Iowa State third with five.

In 1921, Arthur E. "Deac" Wolters, S. S. Graham, Bert Webb, and Otis Higgins of Iowa State ran the 2-mile in 7:52.4—faster than the listed world mark at that time. In 1927, an Iowa State four—Lindus Caulum, LaVerne Witmer, Quincy

Thornburg, and the great Ray Conger—set an American record of 8:08.2 for the 2-mile medley.

The 1920's were a Golden Era for George Bresnahan's University of Iowa team. Beginning in 1923, the Hawkeyes won the mile relay six of seven years. The 1923 triumph was in 3:16.9—1.1 seconds under the American record. Harry Morrow ran the leadoff 440 in 49.8. Gerhard Noll matched that time. Then Charles Brookins, who would hold the world's 220 hurdle record, ran 49.3. Eric Wilson, who in the 1924 Olympic trials bettered two world records, anchored in 48.

Other Iowa schools had winners. Des Moines University won the college mile relay in 1924. Coe won two 1920 relays. Cornell, anchored by a future Olympian and Iowa State coach, George Bretnall, set two records in 1921. A member of the Cornell teams was Russell Cole, who later became president of that college.

Drake's two men, Summerfield Brunk and Bob Carle, tied for the high jump title in 1927. Xavier Boyles of Iowa led the pole vaulters that year. In 1928, Robert Mitchell of Iowa was the discus winner, and 145-pound L.D. Weldon of Graceland won the javelin. The first of three broad jump titles went to Ed Gordon of Iowa in 1929. He would go on to win the 1932 Olympic title. Another Olympic champ of the decade was 400-meter hurdler Morgan Taylor of Grinnell.

Butler College led the college relay teams with

five winners. Wabash, Haskell Institute, and Kansas State, Pittsburg, each won four races.

The turnover in Relays directors was greatest in the 1920's. After two years, M.B. Banks went to Tennessee as football coach in 1921. Kenneth "Tug" Wilson was the director between 1922 and 1925. He, like John L. Griffith, became Big Ten commissioner. Football Coach Ossie Solem assumed the Relays directorship in 1926.

The Drake Relays of the early 1920's were blessed with excellent weather. Not until 1926 were both Drake Relays days unpleasant. Of the 18 meet days in the decade, only four were rainy and one other was cloudy and cool.

Good weather or bad, it was a record-breaking era. Illinois, in 1922, ran the 4-mile relay in 17 minutes 45 seconds for one world mark and set another of 42.3 for the 440 relay in 1923. Charles Paddock ran 125 yards in 12 seconds for a 1924 world record. The 9.5 hundred run by Roland Locke of Nebraska in 1926 was under the world standard. Carl Jark of Army tossed the discus 158 ft. 3 in. in 1929. This was the sixth world record of the decade.

Illinois dominated American records at the Relays. In 1922, Harold Osborn of the Illini jumped 6 ft. 6 in. to set one mark, and Milton Angier threw the javelin 202 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. for another. Angier broke his record the next year with a throw of 203 ft. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  in., the same year an Illini 880

team set a United States mark of 1:27.5. In 1929, an Illinois 480 yard shuttle hurdle team, running 1:02.3, set the school's seventh American record in the twenties.

An American high school record was set in 1924 in the 440 relay by Washington High of Cedar Rapids when Knapp, Potts, Loftus, and "Bab" Cuhel ran the 440 in 45.6 for the United States mark.

A Norwegian pole vaulter provided another American record. Charley Hoff, holder of the world's record at 13 ft. 11 13/16 in., announced he would break the mark at Drake.

The personable Hoff made a great try. He cleared the bar at the 14 ft. pegs, but the bar sag left the vault at 13 ft. 9 1/4 in., an American record. Hoff, while at Drake, predicted man's track ultimates. He envisioned a 7-foot high jump, a 15-foot pole vault, and a 9.3 hundred yard dash—excellent predictions for 1926.

Hoff was not the only non-collegian star of the era. "The World's Fastest Human," Charles Paddock, was the 1924 attraction, and no visitor was ever more cooperative. He lectured on "The Spirit of Sportsmanship." In a downpour he ran the 100 in 9.6, but judges felt the race was helped by a rolling start, although no recall gun was fired. So, he stayed on the track for 30 minutes longer, hoping the rain would abate so he could run another race. Saturday, after his record 125-

yard dash, he ran an unscheduled 100 in :09.9 for the crowd.

Eastern papers disparaged his world's record, calling the 125-yard distance "a freak." But a New York paper gave Drake a 12-5 edge over Penn in comparative marks. The preceding year (1923) had brought the first comparison. With a meet the *Des Moines Capital* called "an orgy of record breaking," Drake had led Penn 10-3.

The East was recognizing the stature of the Drake meet. Carnegie Tech's John Kelly, the first Easterner to compete at Drake, finished fourth in the 100-yard dash in 1921. Dartmouth's sprint team failed in a 1925 preliminary, but in 1927, Don Gwinn of Pittsburgh was the winner of the first Drake hammer throw.

Occidental College, the first west coast college team to come to the Drake Relays, won the college mile and 2-mile relays in 1922. In 1926, Southern California, coached by Dean Cromwell, sent Clarence "Bud" Houser, Olympic shot and discus champion; Ken Grumbles, national 220 hurdles champ; and Leighton Dye, who would win the national collegiate high hurdles. An indication of Drake competition: Dye won his race, but Grumbles lost to George Guthrie of Ohio State, and Houser could take only the discus. John Kuck of Kansas State, Emporia, who would win the 1928 Olympics, beat Houser in the shot put and also set a Drake javelin record.

The 1920's was a period of innovation. The first Relays queen was Marjorie Earl of Simpson in 1928. Marie Hanson of Nevada was princess. Bert McGrane's first form chart predicting winners came out the same year. McGrane would continue with the charts for the *Register* until retirement. The only Relays night session, a consolation for hurdlers and sprinters not qualifying, was in 1929. The 1929 meet also introduced the 440 relay for football lettermen, a race that for several years brought All-Americans to Drake.

In 1929, Notre Dame ran the famous names of "Moon" Mullins, Jack Chevigny, and Jack Elder. They finished third to Army, running Harold Murrell, former Cedar Rapids great, and Nebraska.

Radio made its debut in 1921 with a Kiwanis Club broadcasting station built by Thomas Electric. By means of a telephone microphone, results were broadcast to crowds in front of the *Register and Tribune* building. It was estimated that 20,000 persons heard the results.

The field announcer had amplification in 1923 by a public address system with three horns mounted on the south goal posts. With other media in the field, the press added expertise. Knute Rockne became a *Capital* sports writer for the 1925 meet. George Bresnahan and Ossie Solem wrote for the *Register*. Rockne was still writing in 1928 when he called the meet, "the best I've ever seen." An early hint of the N.C.A.A.—A.A.U.

controversy was in Rockne's column. "When America wins the Olympics, the A.A.U. will take all the credit. Western track coaches repudiate the claim of the A.A.U. that the latter's officers form a governing board for track and field athletics." A coaches' meeting urged appointment of a delegate to the International Amateur Federation in an effort to remove the A.A.U. as America's international sponsor. In a meeting of 1962 Relays coaches, the same spirit was reflected. In 1925, college coaches going overseas on A.A.U. trips were called "henchmen."

The 1925 field came from afar. An example was in the 4-mile relay with Texas and the Oregon Aggies running first and second. The year 1925 also marked the final meet at Haskins stadium; Drake started a stadium building drive immediately after the Relays with \$50,000 cash and \$225,000 bonds sold.

John L. Griffith frequently returned to see the carnival he began. Griffith, a World War I major, was referee in 1920, starter in 1925. The meet had become large, and by 1927, entries totaled 2,796. But clerks such as Bob Evans, Christy McCormick, and Earl Linn closed the meet on time.

National championship teams were there. They included such teams as Illinois in 1921 and 1927, Michigan in 1923, and Southern California in 1926, as well as great athletes from many schools. During the decade seven men won two events at a

single Drake Relays. They were Everette Bradley of Kansas, the first doubler with shot and broad jump victories; Carl Schjoll of Minnesota, who won the javelin and discus; Herb Schwarze of Wisconsin, who won the shot and discus; DeHart Hubbard of Michigan, Merwin Graham of Kansas, and William Wallace of Illinois, all with broad and triple jump wins; and John Kuck.

The high school section had almost a national flavor. Oak Park and LaGrange, Illinois, and Elkhart, Indiana, brought excellent teams in 1921. Alva, Oklahoma, won the mile relay in 1923, despite their never having used batons before. Northeast Kansas City, Tyndall, South Dakota, University High, Chicago, were a few of the alien high school winners in the 1920's.

The decade ended with 11,000 watching the last session of the 1929 Relays, while rain fell and lightning flashed. There was lightning on the track, too. Claude Bracey of Rice, the national champion, won the 100-yard dash in 9.8 over Notre Dame's halfback, Jack Elder, and Eddie Tolan of Michigan. Three years later, Tolan won both dashes at the 1932 Olympics.