

More Sports

BRIAN OLDFIELD PUTS HIS SHOTS WHERE HIS MOUTH IS

At 6'5", 275 lbs., Brian has just one problem with the shot—he must hold it carefully to avoid crushing it.

There's a story spinning around the track-and-field circuit about America's foremost pro shot-putter, Brian Oldfield, when he was a very young boy. It seems he had a heated argument with an older playmate, and not being one to waste words even back then, burly Brian lifted his larger friend off the ground and hurled him across the room. A miffed Mamma Oldfield figured her son was still a growing boy



but nevertheless tried to convince the strapping youth that things just weren't done that way.

Today, more than twenty years later, Brian is still throwing things and retains the same disrespect for the conventional approach. Just a few months ago, in a Texas track meet, he cracked the world's record for putting the shot with a 75-foot toss, using a new-fangled, self-devised technique.

Ask Brian just how monumental a task it was, and he'll tell you. "It's equivalent to running the mile in under 3:40, pole-vaulting over 20 feet, or hitting 75 home runs in a season."

The world champion shot-putter has developed a fantastic four-dimensional turn-and-a-half throw with a dip. ("The first time I tried it, I fell down.") It's much like a discus thrower's release,

and it has done to the shot-putting game what the famed Fosbury flop did to the high jump.

"I'm the only one who can use the style right now," says Brian, "because I'm the only one athletic enough . . . When you've been throwing the shot for 15 years, it gets kinda boring, doing it the same way.

"I get the general chorus of complaints from the old-timers, but there are no rules governing what you do in the circle. You can stand on your head and gargle peanut butter, as long as you release the shot correctly."

With his new style and an increasing national interest in the game, Brian hopes to outdistance all rivals and earn about \$20,000 this year.

Professional track, however, is not sanctioned by the National Collegiate Athletic Association

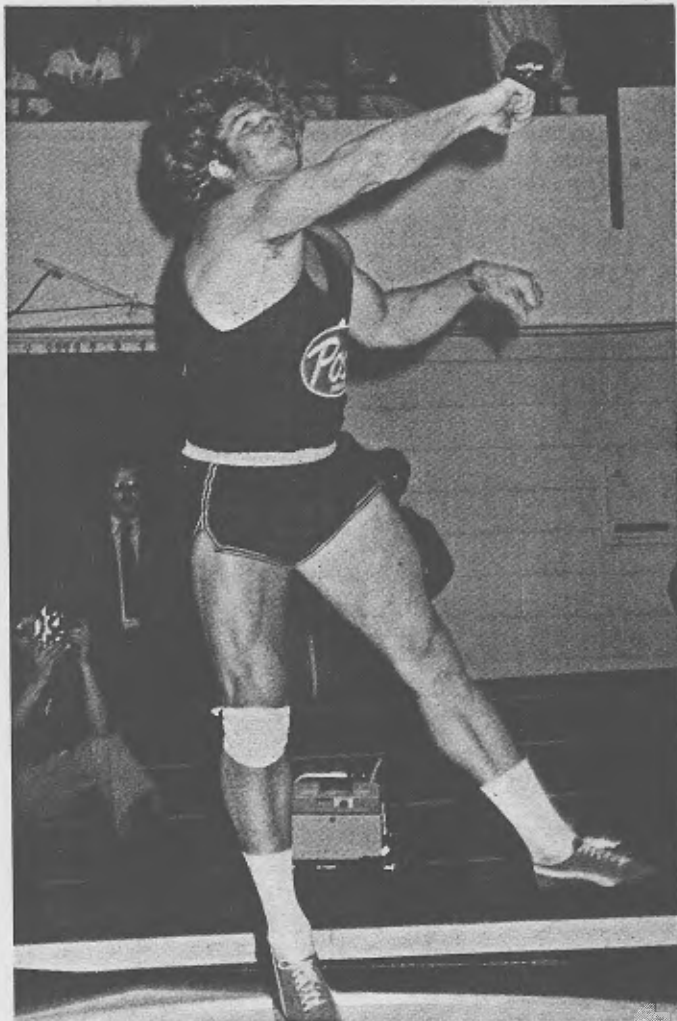
nor the Amateur Athletic Union, but that doesn't daunt the redoubtable Oldfield. "Some people are interested in gold medals; all I want are records and money."

Oldfield began the quest for that matching pair in 1973. After placing only sixth in the '72 Olympics, he began working as a juvenile correction officer. He taught reading for a while, then swimming, wrestling, horseback riding, football and basketball—saving the weekend for track competition.

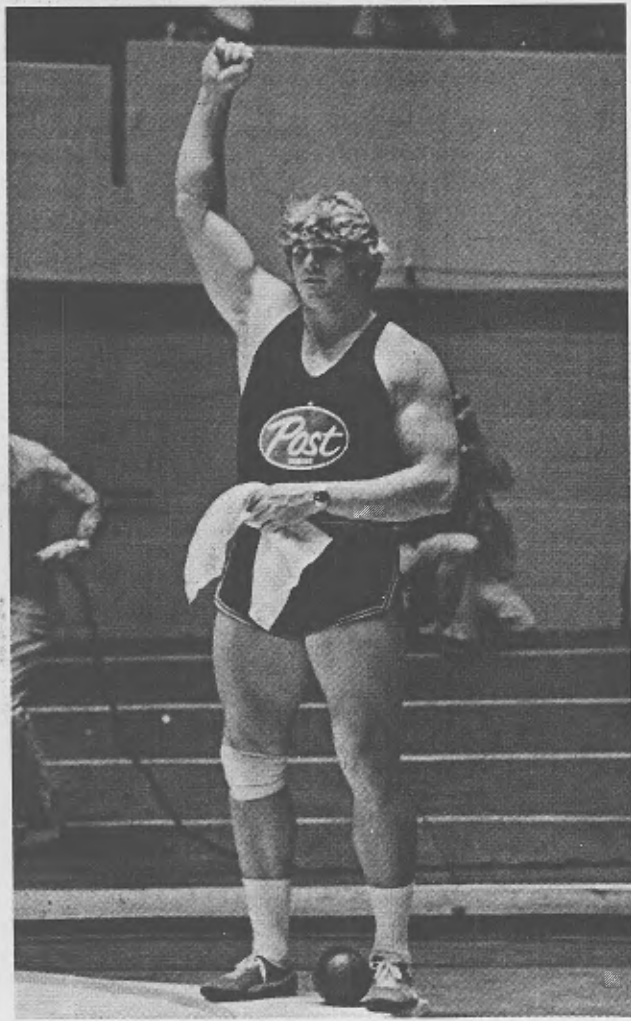
Oldfield has a casual training program; during the season, he gets most of his exercise chasing women. "Partying keeps my cardio-vascular up. . . I devote myself to body-building in the off-season. Oh, I may invite someone over, but then I have no time to fool around."

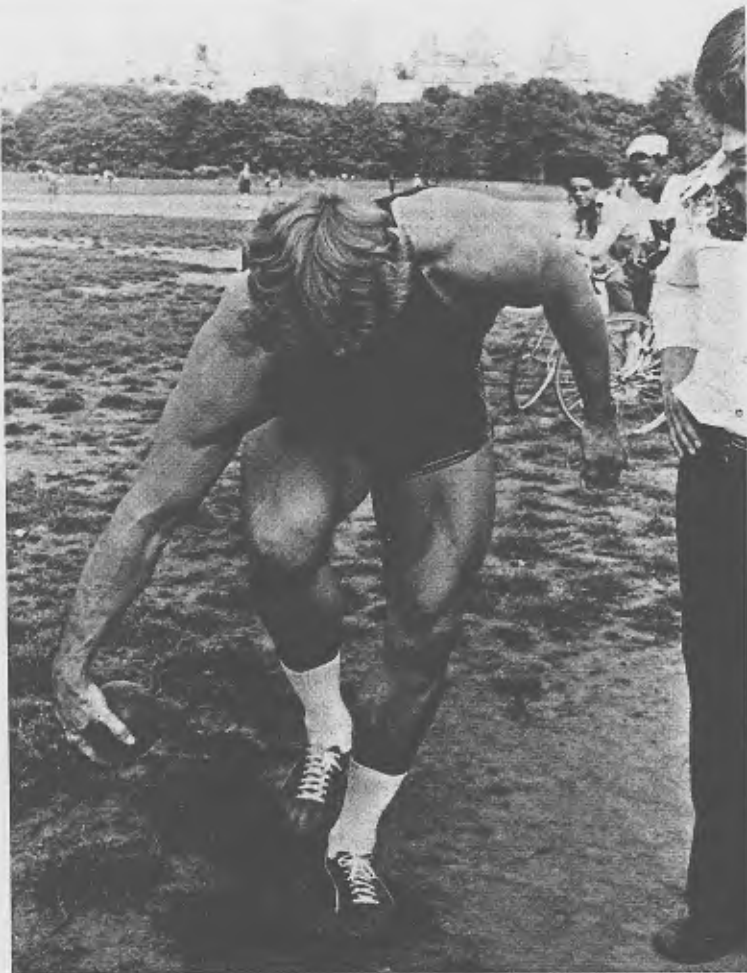
He shuns coaches, team sports

In Houston, Brian heaved his way into the record books with a whopping 75-foot put, cracking the old mark by nearly 3 feet.



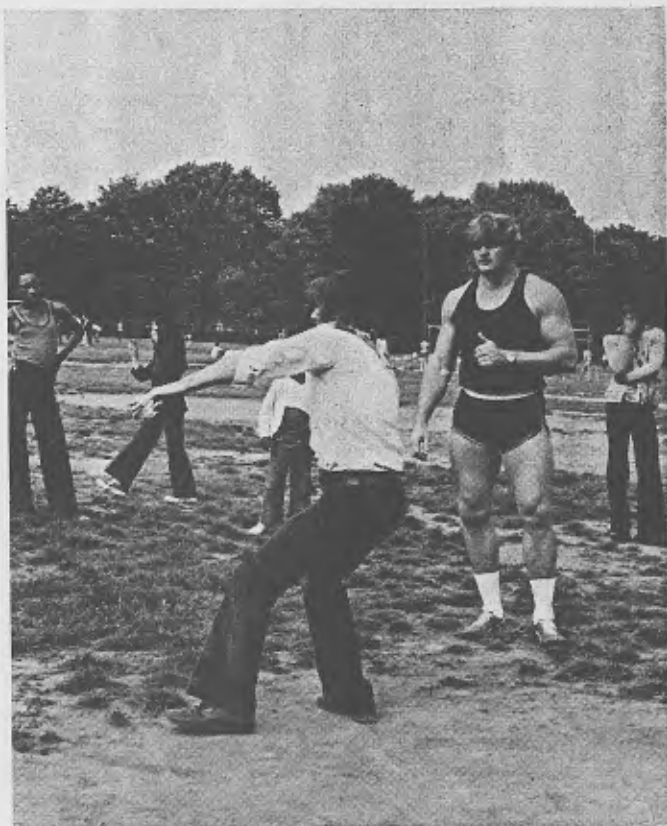
Exulting after a decent toss at New York's Madison Square Garden: "There's no reason why I should ever throw less than 70 feet again."





Brian exhibits his revolutionary new technique. It's much like a discus thrower's style, and according to Oldfield, he's the only one athletic enough to master it.

Then CBS TV's Jim Bouton gave it a whirl. Brian politely suggested that the one-time Yankee stick to being an ex-pitcher.



and any type of forced regimen. In practice, he doesn't even attempt to stay in the circle all shot-putters must confine themselves to, to avoid fouling. "I save myself pain by not trying to stay in the circle during warm-ups. It takes a hell of a lot of braking power to stop a body my size, so I allow myself to continue the forward thrust. I have the discipline to adjust in actual competition.

"With all the traveling we do, it's difficult for a shot-putter to develop a rigid training plan. A long-distance runner like Ben Jipcho can keep in shape by chasing pigeons in Central Park...I can't pack 500 lbs of weights in my overnight bag."

Maybe, that explains why the Illinois native spent the evenings before a recent New York meet "boogie-ing down Broadway" until the wee small hours of the morning. "I'm a very lazy man by nature, and I have to find the right atmosphere to get psyched."

Still, in a day where other professional athletes are getting

Brian shuns training programs and coaches. Sometimes, though, he'll try to impress buddy Bouton and his kids by bending signposts for exercise.



everything but a first mortgage on downtown Manhattan, Brian is barely making a living.

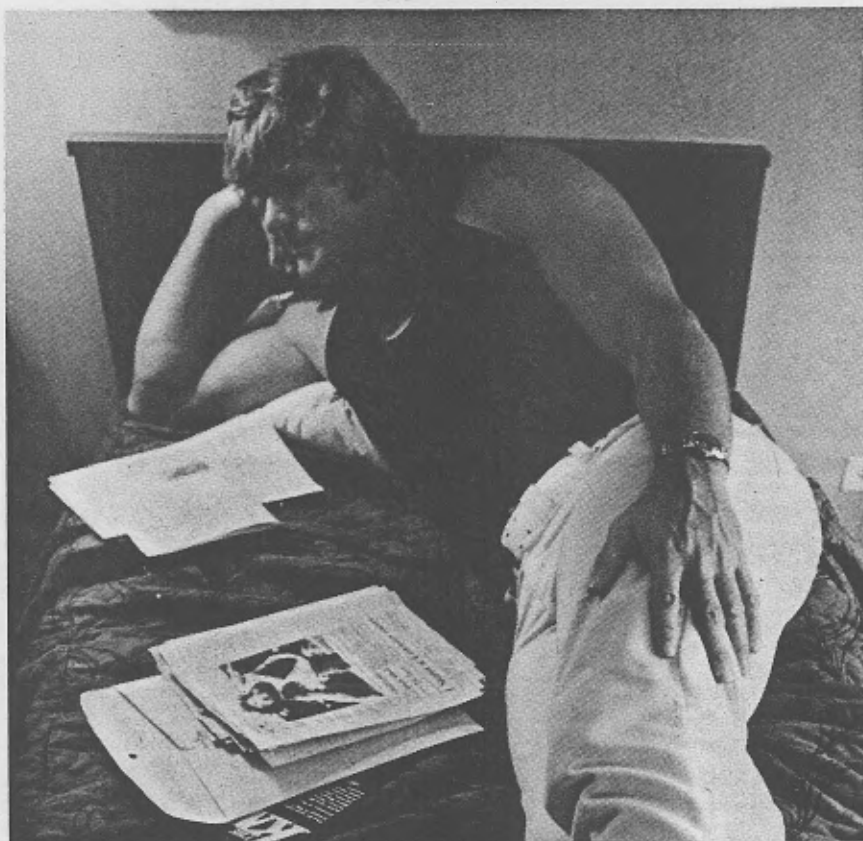
"It doesn't depress me. I do what I can to promote the game and professional track, but I'm still looking for someone to give me a million to play with. As long as I can eat well and go out once in a while, I'm happy. That's about as much as I ever wanted.

"Look, I know all the putters today, and I'm being very realistic. I own the event, it's all mine. There's no one who can deal with me. Whenever someone shows signs of strength, I just step out there and kick his butt. (He beat Feurbach's best toss at the Modesto relays while still clad in street attire.)

"Oh, there'll be a lot of people getting up for the Olympics and some of them may even reach 73 feet, but I know I can crack 70 every time out. I can't compete in the Olympics because I'm a pro, but if you look at the top 50 throws in '76, they'll all be mine."○

—JOHN LISCIO

By day, the massive shot-putter relaxes in his motel room before a meet, then goes out partying all night. "It keeps my cardio-vascular up."



IN THE KNOW
PUZZLE
 —JACQUELINE BRITTON

NOMENCLATURE

Many surnames are also first names. In the list below, supply the missing name which links two people together.

Hal ○ _____ ○ of Wales

Anne ○ _____ MacLaine

Madame ○ _____ McQueen

Jan _____ ○ Hayden

Harry _____ ○ Capote

Jerry _____ ○ Stone

Robert _____ ○ Anderson

Canada _____ ○ Marvin

Now anagram the encircled letters to spell out Walter Huston's timely tune.

Answers on page 64

Brian Oldfield

CONTINUED

track program. "I went there," he says, "because I felt it afforded me the chance to be a big fish in a little pond—you know, the big ham thing. My coach at Middle Tennessee was a nice enough guy. He came over to see me the first day of track practice and told me he didn't know all that much about shotputting but that he'd do anything he could to help me. That was the last time I saw him."

Oldfield's best collegiate throw was 59-2. But still lacking any formal coaching, Oldfield took up weightlifting on his own and gradually began to increase his throwing distance until, by 1970, he was up to 65 feet. A broken hand then retarded his progress, but at the 1972 Olympic trials at Eugene, Ore., he shocked nearly everyone by beating out former world-record holder Randy Matson for a place on the U.S. team.

"I realized then what explosive strength Brian had," recalls Matson. "But even now he continues to amaze me. I really thought we weren't ready yet for a seventy-five-foot throw, that instead the record would go to seventy-three, then seventy-four, a few inches at a time. But seventy-five feet? I'll tell you this: Al Feuerbach or George Woods will never be able to stay up with Brian now with their present techniques. I had doubts about the spin, but I'm a believer now."

Another former record-holder, Parry O'Brien, says, "I've been watching a lot of shotputters for a lot of years, and Oldfield is the strongest, fastest and most explosive." But O'Brien, a founder of the old shotput style, sees flaws in the Oldfield spin. "He fouls with it," says O'Brien. "From what I've seen, his foot goes out of the circle." To which Oldfield counters, "I think

Of all the shot-putters he's seen, former champ Parry O'Brien says, "Oldfield is the strongest, fastest and most explosive."

O'Brien is in fear that his style, the one he's been credited with starting, is going to change. There are a lot of coaches throughout the world now who are beginning to see that, with

my spin, they can combine the coaching of both the shotput and discus because the footwork and movement now are really the same style."

But back when he beat Matson for a place on the Olympic team, it was Oldfield's lifestyle, not shotput style, that caused controversy. One of the more vivid pictures taken at the Munich Olympics was that of

