

An Historical Study of the Rise and Fall of the
International Track Association
1972-1976

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Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to examine the history of the rise and fall of the International Track Association, which existed from 1972 to 1976. This period encompasses the ITA's origin and birth, the rise and growth, and ultimately, its failure and demise.

The study used the historical method to document the rise and fall of the ITA. A logical order was followed using data relevant to the life of the ITA tour. The history of the ITA is arranged chronologically with heading and dates pertinent to the key time periods related to the birth, growth and death of the ITA.

The subject pool of the study was delimited to former ITA athletes and staff members, as well as members of the accredited media. The telephone interview process was used to reach a cross-section of former ITA members. The subject pool consisted of 15 individuals was used to gain primary information. Other primary information was obtained from ITA newsletters, correspondence and souvenir programs.

The conclusions of this study are: a) the ITA lacked adequate quality and depth in many of its events; b) the ITA failed to generate sufficient capital backing through advertising and television revenues to survive long-term; and c) the fan support of track and field was too erratic on a city-to-city basis to sustain and support a professional tour.

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Isaiah 40: 29-31 (KJV)

**This work is dedicated to all entrepreneurs who have
accepted the challenge of pursuing financial independence,
and with God's help, the courage to pursue a dream.**

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Chapter I

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

A variety of less visible professional sports are thriving today. One professional tour which materialized but was unable to proliferate was the International Track Association (ITA). The ITA came into existence in 1972 and was disbanded by 1976. The question arises: what were the factors or themes that came into play which affected its existence, and, finally, its demise. There is limited literature concerning the annals of professional track and field. This study provides a vehicle for new insights to those studying the continuum of track and field history.

Track and field, as the oldest and most popular sport of the Summer Olympic Games, is the Games' ultimate attraction. Until the formation of the World Track and Field Championships in 1983, there was little to attract the interest of track and field fans between Olympiads in terms of worldwide international competition between the Eastern and Western hemispheres.

In the absence of a professional track and field circuit, it became Michael O'Hara's concept for track and field to offer a new venue for opportunity. The ITA was a team of professional track and field athletes, both male and female, which toured the USA, Canada and overseas from 1973 to 1976. He wanted to take track to a level above and beyond the Olympics, to a so-called "resurrection status" (O'Hara & Steiner, ITA newsletter, September 24, 1976). In the professional track realm, elite-level athletes could compete as well as thrive as a means of gainful employment, while at the same time provide a worthwhile form of entertainment. O'Hara described the ITA as a "traveling Olympics show" (LeBlanc, 1974, p. 21).

Almost 500,000 spectators witnessed ITA competition in its four-year history while over 300 million more fans watched ITA meets on television (O'Hara & Steiner, ITA newsletter, September 24, 1976). But, by 1976, the popularity of the ITA suddenly dropped. Somewhat surprised about the drastic downturn of events, Steiner commented, "We had a good year in 1975. Ben Jipcho was very hot. We needed another year of sponsorship in 1976 that we had in 1975 in order to continue to exist. If it wasn't premature, something ultimately went wrong and we badly failed" (B. Steiner, personal communication, January 30, 1992).

Unlike other professional sports leagues which had the luxury of learning from the mistakes of its predecessors, O'Hara's professional track and field tour was a prototype. Previous efforts to form professional track associations had been filled mostly with bizarre promotions, sordid exploitation of athletes, and an almost perfect record of early failure. The most recent attempts prior to the ITA were the National Track and Field Association (NTFA) and the Professional Track Association (PTA), following the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. The NTFA proposed setting team franchises around the country, but the idea died early because of a lack of financial backing. The PTA was formed by a group of business professionals led by Al Schallau, a Los Angeles attorney. The league was scheduled to get underway in 1970, then rescheduled the tour for 1971, but nothing was heard about the league again (O'Hara, et. al., 1973).

While professional track and field has succeeded in Australia under a somewhat different structure, previous attempts of developing track into a professional sport ranged from impractical to ridiculous (O'Hara, et al., 1973). A primary characteristic of the Australian model was that it involved legalized betting by registered bookmakers. The betting included both dashes and distance events. Its season ran from November to April, with meets taking place in most

states of Australia. There also was a cross country season, which includes events from four miles to the marathon. While there were no field events held in any pro track meets in Australia, some of the larger clubs included professional track bicycle racing on the program (O'Hara, et al., 1973).

Like numerous professional minor sports leagues which exist in the 1990s on the strength of stable advertising and television contracts, the ITA faced financial obstacles in the 1970's. It's basic marketing strategy appeared to be straight-forward: to develop a "stable" of world-class athletes in a variety of events, primarily for the indoor track circuit. Several features were included to keep fan interest peaked.

Meets were streamlined from the format typical of the outdoor collegiate meet in order to stack the competition and load up events, while also keeping the meet time frame within a 2-3 hour range. The concept of a Grand Prix point-system was implemented to bolster incentive for money earnings (Ryun, 1976). Specialty events, particularly in the dashes and relays, were added to provide flair to meets.

Other adaptations included:

1. The events included dashes featuring professional football stars, as well as a male-versus-female 30-meter race featuring male shot putters versus top female sprinters (Ryun, 1976).

2. Technological advances such as pacer lights and electronic starting blocks were introduced (O'Hara, et al., 1973). Although the pacer lights were an ITA staple for its four-year existence, electronic starting blocks were not introduced until after the ITA's demise (M. O'Hara, personal communication, February 3, 1993).

The initiator of this unique format was O'Hara. A 1964 U.S. Olympic volleyball player, O'Hara was a sports promoter and stockholder with a record of

involvement starting professional sports leagues. He had a credible "track record," but may have not have been successful in particular ventures. In 1967, he was one of the founding organizers of the American Basketball Association (ABA) as an initial planner and co-owner of the Kentucky Colonels and later, was a co-owner and general manager of the Dallas Chaparrals. He also was a founder of the World Hockey Association (WHA), which was in existence from 1972 until 1976 (Jares, 1972). O'Hara also had a contributing role as a promoter in helping start the World League of Volleyball. Three-quarters of the World League's 1990 budget of \$4 million underwritten by corporate sponsors and the other \$1 million by TV contracts, unlike the ITA which had limited corporate support and television exposure (Baker, 1990). O'Hara's company, O'Hara Enterprises International (OEI), enjoys the distinction of having pioneered more college, professional and Olympic sporting endeavors than any company in history. OEI helped establish professional sports leagues in basketball, hockey and volleyball and created the professional track concept that produced 50 meets in five countries on three different continents (Congressional Record, 1991).

O'Hara spent two years of planning before announcing the birth of the ITA before a nationally-televised audience on ABC at the closing ceremonies of the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. He carefully avoided Olympic team members until the conclusion of the Munich Games, in order not to jeopardize the athletes' amateur eligibility (O'Hara, et al., 1973). In that two-year planning period (1970-72), he contacted 103 of the largest arenas in Western Europe and North America in an effort to assemble and arrange a circuit. With athletes like Bob Seagren and Jim Ryun scraping for financial survival, O'Hara's announcement of the ITA opportunity was a vehicle for them to continue their careers (Jares, 1972). Jares said what O'Hara lacked in operational skills and experience for Olympic-caliber track and field, he made up for by the talent he recruited to serve

on his ITA advisory board, landing some of the top-name figures in the sport, collegiate and entertainment market.

Reid (1975, p. 58) reported that the ITA concept was recognized by many as viable, but the consensus of track enthusiasts tended "to dismiss the ITA because of the unwritten sports commandment that says no matter how good amateur athletes are, professionals should be better." Despite 34 world "bests" that were broken or tied in 51 meets in its four-year history, O'Hara was forced to cease operations in August 1976 following the Olympic Games in Montreal (ITA newsletter, September 24, 1976). According to O'Hara, the final stumbling block was failing to attract the next generation of Olympic medalists in Montreal. Among those O'Hara sought included distance star John Walker of New Zealand and decathlete Bruce Jenner of the United States, both world record-holding gold medal winners. In addition, an Olympic boycott by African nations also diminished the market value of up-and-coming Third World distance runners. Although the ITA was financially in the "black" when it ceased operation, O'Hara stated the ITA's demise was imminent. The absence of 1976 Olympic gold medalists in its ranks the ITA couldn't survive another season without suffering significant financial losses (M. O'Hara, personal communication, February 3, 1993).

O'Hara's repeated attempts to secure financial backing from advertisers were soured due to several factors: poor attendance, the result of erratic performances and high expectations of the athletes; higher quality performances by athletes on the amateur circuit; poorly-organized local promotional efforts (C. Nelson, personal communication, February 12, 1992). Also, lucrative offers made to Olympic medalists for product endorsements, made retaining one's amateur status more financially attractive (M. O'Hara, personal communication, January

27, 1992). Details of the tour's final two seasons are sketchy. There has not been an in-depth analysis as to why the ITA was not a success.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to chronicle the birth, life, and demise of the ITA. The ultimate question to be answered is: why did it fail? Also, why did it come about? Who participated? What impact does it have for future sports enterprises? The historical method was utilized to examine the professional tour's life span. There has not been a study as to why the ITA was unable to proliferate. It is hypothesized that the ITA failed for the following reasons:

1. The athlete could earn significantly more income retaining his or her "amateur" status and earning "under the table" sponsorship money for appearances and races.

2. The ITA could not financially support itself adequately via gate receipts, as well through sufficient advertising, sponsorship and television revenues.

Other themes evolving from this time period include: signing bonuses, amateur payoffs, product endorsements, black/white relationships, leadership style, contracts, sponsorship, personalities of athletes, and the 1978 Amateur Athletic Act.

Credibility was also an obstacle. World records by the professional track tour were not recognized by any amateur organizations. Although many world "bests" were established by the ITA, the athletes' overall performances were lacking in comparison with the top amateur athletes.

Definitions

The following definitions are presented for common-use terminology as related to this study. The focus was to develop working or operating definitions for the specific terms:

International Track Association (ITA): A team of professional track and field athletes, both male and female, which toured the USA, Canada and overseas from 1973 to 1976.

ITA track and field meet: A track competition format utilized by the ITA. The meet format consisted of a combination of 12-15 track and field events. The majority traditional of indoor and outdoor track competition, but specialty events were also included. The exact average number of participants per meet is not known, but its believed to be between 30-40.

Primary sources: "Those documents in which the individual describing the event was present when it occurred" (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 814).

Professional track athlete: A track athlete who competes for prize money and/or a salary.

Secondary sources: "Documents in which the individual describing the event was not present but obtained a description from someone else, who may or may not have directly observed the event" (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 814).

Delimitations

The subjects of this study were delimited to former officials and athletes of the ITA, as well as to members of the accredited media. The ITA members and media sources were chosen because of several factors. Officials were chosen because of their leadership roles in the organization. Athletes and the media were chosen primarily based on profile, but also availability. Tour members with a prominent record of success resulting in Olympic gold and silver medals were considered foremost, but those distinguished as a "world record-holder" were also considered. A less-prominent member, distance runner Jerome Howe, was selected because of his graduate-level research involving the study of personality traits of ITA male athletes. The media was selected base on availability and exposure to the tour.

Limitations

For the purpose of this paper, the following limitations existed:

1. This was an historical study, and was therefore based and limited to telephone interviews, newspaper, magazine articles, news releases and souvenir programs.

2. The ITA existed for four years, and hence, the amount of correspondence still available was limited and not always in complete chronological order, untraceable, or discarded by tour officials.

3. The varied level of cooperation by the various individuals contacted for interviewing purposes was inconsistent.

Assumptions

Assumptions of this study were:

1. The subjects interviewed for the study would provide accurate, factual information.

2. The resources acquired represent the most accurate depiction of the events surrounding the ITA.

By examining the factors involved in the birth, existence and death of this professional track and field tour, the study will serve as a "window to the past," benefiting those who are interested in track's transitional phases.

Chapter II

Procedures

The purpose of this study was to document the history of the ITA between 1972 and 1976. The historical method was used to arrange and discuss chronologically the ITA's. The history of the ITA's tour inception in 1972 until its demise in 1976.

Historical method

Borg and Gall (1989) describe the historical method of the research as "the systematic search for facts relating to questions about the past, and the interpretation of these facts" (p. 806). British historian Edward Carr said history "is a continuing process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and past" (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 806).

Throughout the literature on historical research, sound judgment and common sense are considered the most valuable traits that a historical researcher should possess (Hostetler, 1988). Garraghan (1973) discusses honesty as the key to the historical method: "All important facts and circumstances, good or bad, creditable or otherwise, regarding a person, an institution, an event [must] be recorded" (p.43). The subject of objectivity is discussed. But, in fact, the historical method does not require impartiality or a detached neutral attitude. Objectivity does require self-discipline to avoid clouding of judgment and self-control of feelings of sympathy (Garraghan, 1973).

"The basic aim of science is the achievement of understanding. In the final analysis, scientifically speaking, knowledge is the equivalent of confirmed theories" (D. H. Clark & H. H. Clark, 1984, p. 24). Research disseminates information "as to why and how certain things affect other things and explains how it works, what are its properties, and so on. Facts, as such, do not represent

knowledge" (D. H. Clark & H. H. Clark, p. 24). The accumulation of data is one step in the research, an important link to the total picture but is only a means to the main purpose - which is "the formulation and confirmation of theory" (D. H. Clark & H. H. Clark, p. 24).

Sources of Data

Sources of data in historical research may be either primary or secondary in nature. Primary sources are "derived from reliable witnesses who saw and heard an event and recorded it soon afterward" (Thomas and Nelson, 1985). Thus, minutes of meetings, constitutions, bylaws of organizations, personal correspondence, and newsletters, are considered primary sources. Remains and relics are physical evidence not intended to be formal records and are also primary records (Thomas and Nelson, 1985). Official documents of the ITA are forms of primary sources used.

Primary source information about the ITA was provided by former ITA officials, as well as former ITA athletes and members of the media. Information from primary sources came from telephone interviews. Dave Wottle provided copies of ITA newsletters from O'Hara and Nelson and other related correspondence dated between January 14, 1975 to September 24, 1976. In addition, Wottle provided two ITA souvenir programs and two letters to O'Hara from Edward Garvey, the ITA athlete representative who was executive director of the International Association of Track and Field Professionals. Jim Terrill, ITA Director of Operations, also provided a souvenir program.

Secondary sources are those removed from the original event, such as when a reporter interviews an eye witness (Good and Scates, 1954). The greater the distance between the writer and the event, the greater the increase of error (Thomas and Nelson, 1985). Information obtained from sources as the *New York Times*, *Track & Field News*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Runner's World*, are valuable

secondary resources. The information gained from these sources built the base from which to broaden the scope of the study through the use of personal interviews.

Collection of Data

The historical researcher acts as a conduit to describe for others what happened. In this study, telephone interviews were used as a technique for the collection of primary data. Stewart and Cash (1974) define interviewing as: "a process of dyadic communication with a predetermined and serious purpose designed to interchange behavior and usually involving the asking and answering of questions" (p. 3). A dyad may be described as "face-to-face communication with pervasive feedback and in which the roles of speaker and listener are constantly shifting" (Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 4). The type of interview used was the directive form, meaning that the interviewer established the original purpose of the interview and that at least in the beginning had control of the communication situation (Stewart and Cash, 1974).

Questions were developed primarily based in light of the absence of data and information concerning the ITA's final months of existence (see Appendix C). Individuals chosen to participate in this study were athletes and members of the media chosen primarily based on success at the Olympic level, but also on availability. Although most of the participants were not contacted in advance, all but one very willingly participated and gave of their time and "expert" opinion concerning the rise and fall of the ITA tour.

Emphasizing the importance of feedback from ITA participants from a wide range of expertise, Gaylord said input from both Olympic medalists as well those lesser-known world class athletes was critical.

We learn from our mistakes or from our misfortune. Therefore, it is important to get not only opinions of [key participants] who have had a great deal of success, but also the opinion of those who were less fortunate. Many times in our lives we ask ourselves, 'If I had a chance to do it all over again, what would I do differently?' It is believed those who are or were successful gave their ingredients for success, while those who were not shared their shortcomings, hence giving us a total composite of the important factors in the formation and development of professional sports leagues. (Gaylord, 1991, p. 51)

Data analysis

The historical method may be structured into two phases. First, the correct technique is applied to find and critique the data. Second, the results must be arranged and presented according to an effective plan. A hypothesis comes only after early research has established a large data base. (Thomas and Nelson, 1985) Formulation of the historical hypothesis is done by meeting three criteria: a) the hypothesis is founded on available facts and contradicts none, b) the hypothesis is plausible and does not contradict the laws of nature, and c) the hypothesis is capable of disapproval or verification (Shafer, 1980).

In historical analysis, the concern is with reporting observations with accuracy. Historians can not create sources; they are dependent on the ones that they find. The validity and reliability of each source of information must be carefully examined. Primary sources, or the records made by the actual witnesses or by direct testimony from word of mouth, should be used as much as possible. Careful examination of all information is essential in order to classify it as original or usable source. (Hostetler, 1988, p. 25)

Establishing validity is done through the process of historical criticism. Criticism is broken down into two areas: external and internal criticism. External criticism deals with the actual document and examines the authenticity of evidence. This process includes investigation of authorship, possibility of forgery, dating the evidence, and any means of identifying the actual document. Internal criticism is done after the requirements of external requirements are achieved. At this point the content or actual meaning of the document is examined (Borg and Gall, 1989).

Reliability is measured through correlation between two or more sources. In historical research, correlation can not be done statistically as it is done in other research methods. Therefore, the researcher's best judgment comes into play to determine reliability between sources. It is the researcher's responsibility to look for supporting documentation to ensure the reliability of the data. The final analysis rests on the honesty and credibility of the witness or source (Shafer, 1980).

The arrangement of data in historical research is a form of interpretation. (Shafer, 1980) Shafer said periodization, or the arrangement of dates according to key developments, may be accomplished by identifying the marker events along the continuum of history. It is up to the researcher to decide on either a chronological or thematic organization (Hostetler, 1988).

In Chapter Three, the profiles of key participants of the ITA, both athletes and staff are presented. Most of these individuals served as the source for interviews that are quoted in later chapters. Chapter Four discusses the origins of the organization, the tour's inaugural campaign, the life of the ITA, and ultimately, its demise. Chapter Five presents observations and hypothesizes why the organization failed. The final chapter summarizes and provides conclusions concerning the organization's demise based upon the observations. The challenge in the present study was to gather evidence which would, or would not, support the proposed hypothesis and then, finally, to provide a concluding commentary interpreting the evidence.

Chapter III

Principle Participants of the ITA

As in any professional sports venture, the ITA tour had its principle players which gave it personality and identity. While these participants included many Olympic champions and world record holders, certain individuals were responsible for having a greater impact than others. These key participants included: Jim Ryun, three-time Olympian and former world record holder; Michael O'Hara, president and principal stockholder; Brian Oldfield, 1972 Olympian; Bob Hayes, 1964 Olympic gold medalist; Bob Seagren, 1968 Olympic gold medalist and former world record holder; Ben Jipcho, 1968 Olympian; and Wyomia Tyus, a two-time Olympic gold medalist (ITA souvenir program). This chapter will briefly describe the principal participants of the organization.

Jim Ryun

Serving the role of athlete, promoter and advisory board member, Ryun's presence was perhaps the most significant of any ITA athlete. Initially, the hope of fans and management was that Ryun might regain his world-class form, and somehow redeem himself for the Olympic gold medal which painfully eluded him in 1968 and '72 Games (Ryun & Phillips, 1984). In the thin air of Mexico City (7,300 feet) at the 1968 Olympiad, he finished second in the 1500 meters (3:37.9) behind Kenya's Kip Keino (3:34.9).

After a brief retirement, Ryun returned to the scene to make the 1972 Olympic team, only to have disaster strike in the 1,500-meter preliminaries. Knocked down by an errant elbow while passing Pakistani Mohamed Younis entering the final 500 meters, the International Olympic Committee refused to reinstate Ryun. Even though a foul had been committed, IOC officials refused to view films of the incident, even after the conclusion of the Munich Games.

Although the IOC's rationale was never totally made public record, it is believe the IOC feared setting a precedence by allowing Ryun to be reinstated (Ryun & Phillips, 1984). Eager to seize the opportunity following the misfortunate turn of events, O'Hara told *Sport's Illustrated's* Ron Reid (1973),

I knew I had to get that combination (Ryun and Keino) for our meets. His reasoning was sound. Ryun's fall in his Olympic 1,500-meter heat almost guaranteed that people would pay to see how he would fare upright, and the dramatic history of the Ryun-Keino races was equally irresistible. (p. 24)

Athletes like Ryun appeared eager for the opportunity coming off a disappointing amateur career after being tripped in the semifinals of the 1,500 meters at the Munich Games. Struggling with his allergies and frustrations, Ryun had only \$200 in his checking account when he left Kansas for the 1972 Olympic Trials in Oregon. With his wife, Ann, expecting their second child, "My first thought was, 'Where do I sign?' " said Ryun (Jares, 1972, p. 40). "O'Hara's timing for me and others had been perfect. As he would say later, 'It was an idea whose time had come. For me, a romantic means to an end'" (Ryun, 1976, p. 40).

"The amateur life meant a five-mile morning run and an afternoon training session lasting 2-3 hours and that was sandwiched around a seven-hour photographic job" (Ryun, 1976, p. 40). "Now my motivation is greater than it ever was. I'm not running for a watch, or a trophy, or a medal. I'm running for my livelihood" (Anderson, 1973, p. 55). Although some of the pressure of an Olympic gold medal was still there, Ryun later told Anderson (1973) he felt both relieved and happy with his new challenge. "We all tick better as pros. I know I do," Ryun said. "My reason is that I'm my own man" (p. 59).

Born on April 29, 1947 in Wichita, KS (Hanley, 1973), Ryun was particularly sensitive about his treatment by the American media for Olympic failures. The ITA offered a vehicle for atonement.

The public and press were hard put to deal with my Munich performance. They'd primed themselves for a Jim Ryun gold medal. Now, after the headline reports of my fall, the time clearly come to put the battle-scarred Jim Ryun saga to rest - for good. Many felt I'd again shamed our country and let me know it. Others expressed sympathy, as if I'd died. (Ryun & Phillips, 1984, p. 172)

Despite Ryun's initial high hopes, with his ITA duties and responsibilities as an advisory board member and tour promoter in combination with lack of an adequate training base, it soon became clear that it was a near-impossible task for Ryun to perform to his renowned world-class level. As a promotional representative for ITA, Ryun made advance trips to nearly every city on the tour's schedule. For the tour's first 16 meets in 1973, this equated out to 32 trips out of town within a five-month period (Ryun & Phillips, 1984).

I had very few what I would call quality races. The intensity of the schedule was very demanding. There was a heavy promotional side to my responsibilities that kept me quite tired from all the travel that went along with it. It was simply impossible to train adequately and race at optimum levels under the circumstances. But I have no regrets. I had a family to support and I wanted to keep running. ITA made that possible and I'm grateful. (Ryun & Phillips, 1984, p. xxi)

In his autobiography, *In Quest of Gold*, released in late 1984, Ryun tells his story of his achievements and disappointments, and how becoming a born-again Christian in 1972 prior to the Munich Olympics changed his life. Describing the era (1972-76) parallel to his ITA experience, Ryun said it was not until the conclusion of his professional career before he completely dedicated himself to God. "I had prayed for the Lord to come into my life. But all I had done was the open the door to let Him inside. I had not yet really turned my life over to Him" (Ryun & Phillips, 1984, p. 185). Ryun depicted the transitional phase to Heyse (1986) during a visit to the Cleveland area where he was on hand to help promote a local road race:

My life up to 1972 was a physical one. I felt I didn't need God and didn't want to listen to him. My first response to my friend, who eventually helped me convert, was, I don't need that stuff. I was looking for some visible sign or difference it would make becoming a Christian. My goal in the 1972 Olympics was to use the gold medal as a means to glorify God, but it didn't work out that way. God chose, as a result of the fall, an actually greater platform for what he wanted to do with my life. Becoming a born-again Christian was the pivotal part of my life. (Heyse, 1986, p. B1)

Ryun's preoccupation had remained with his Munich experiences. He told Phillips, "I was still vainly trying to recapture my position as a great runner" (Ryun & Phillips, 1984, p. 185). Although the process of becoming Christian was slow, Ryun said, "... , the Lord stood patiently by, inching closer to the driver's seat of my life, ...," (Ryun & Phillips, 1984, p. 186).

His sudden retirement following the ITA's 1976 season opener at Salt Lake City surprised many. Plagued by a nagging Achilles heel during the 1975 season, the injury flared again during the half mile competition at Salt Lake City, forcing Ryun to drop out midway through the race. Several nights later, he called it a career. Ryun's frame of mind was one of rejuvenation, as well as both happiness and a sense of relief (Ryun & Phillips, 1984). Ryun recounted a dream to Phillips which prompted his final decision.

As I continued to lay there, I began to do something very unusual for me, something I just don't do. I began to weep. It was not from grief or disappointment, but my emotions were being touched on so many levels. It was a final release, the closing of a lengthy chapter of my life. (p. 190)

Michael O'Hara

A 1964 US Olympic volleyball player in Tokyo, O'Hara was more than just a typically talented athlete. Born in 1932, the Waco, Texas native (US Olympic Committee, personal communication, February 2, 1993) was good enough to "make All-American seven straight years and get elected to the Volleyball Hall of Fame" (Jares, 1972, p. 39). By trade, O'Hara is a sports promoter. He also helped in franchising sport enterprise. He was a financial adviser and founder of

the American Basketball Association (ABA) and World Hockey Association (WHA). His goal was not only to make professional track competitive, but also more appealing to the fan, arranging the meet format in stepladder fashion to spotlight each event and its competitors. The *Los Angeles Times'* Chris Baker (1990) reported "they laughed when O'Hara devised the three-point shot for the (ABA), (when) the (WHA) began signing such underage stars such as Wayne Gretzky and Pro-Track (the ITA) started paying runners" (p. C4).

In 1967, he was one of the founding organizers of the ABA as an initial planner and co-owner of the Kentucky Colonels. Later, he was a co-owner and general manager of the Dallas Chaparrals and was instrumental in the ABA attracting such stars as Moses Malone and Julius "Dr. J" Erving from the NBA. He also was a founder of the WHA, which was in existence from 1972 until 1976 (Jares, 1972). Baker (1990) also pointed out that "the ABA, WHA and Pro-Track were each making money when O'Hara left" (p. C4).

After selling his equity interest in the ABA's Kentucky franchise to John Y. Brown, O'Hara became co-owner and general manager of the Dallas Chaparrals until the franchise moved to San Antonio following the 1972-73 season (M. O'Hara, personal communication, February 3, 1993). He sold his interest in the Dallas Chaparrals at a profit (Jares, 1972). Like the ITA, the Chaparrals had attendance problems. In six years in Dallas, the Chaparrals never drew more than 7,800 fans for a game; their average was about 2,500 (Pluto, 1990).

Basketball Weekly's Dave Overpeck told Pluto.

Covering a Chaparrals game is a lot like going to a wake. In the ABA, it's not unusual to go into a town knowing that the club won't be there next year. But the Chaparrals are different. Never, not even in the floating craps of the ABA, has it been announced so early that a team is leaving town before next season. (p. 289)

The Chaparrals had Cliff Hagan as their coach the first two-and-a-half seasons, then five coaches in the next two-and-a-half seasons. They were never a factor in the playoffs. The situation became heated following the 1972-73 season when several African-American players thought that management was trading African-American players for white players (Pluto, 1990).

Along with partner Gary Davidson, O'Hara purchased franchise rights to the WHA's San Diego franchise for \$25,000 (Jares, 1972). Unable to acquire sufficient financial support the pair tried moving the franchise to San Francisco, but the Bay area was not interested. The National Hockey League already established a professional hockey franchise in the San Francisco-Oakland area, the California Golden Seals. Ultimately, O'Hara and Davidson sold their investment rights to a group of Canadian businessmen for \$215,000 (Jares, 1972), who started the Quebec Nordiques franchise (now a member of the NHL) (M. O'Hara, personal communication, February 3, 1993).

O'Hara also had a contributing role in the development of the World League of Volleyball. Three-quarters of the World League's 1990 budget of \$4 million underwritten by corporate sponsors and the other \$1 million by TV contracts, unlike the ITA which had limited corporate support and television exposure. He told Baker (1990) in a *Los Angeles Times* article,

Of all things I've been involved in, I've never seen a league that has started with the credibility, experience and capital this league has. Usually you sweat out the first year. The NBA didn't start out this well. The NFL didn't start out this well. All those leagues started out shaky, but people forget their humble beginnings. (p. C4)

Baker reported the World League was "the brainchild of O'Hara and Laker owner Jerry Buss, the World League is composed of national volleyball teams from the United States, the Soviet Union, Brazil, China, France, Italy, Japan and the Netherlands" (Baker, 1990, p. C4). But according to communication director Richard Wanninger of the United States Volleyball Association (USVBA), "O'Hara

was involved with the 1990 World League in a promotional sense only. The idea of the World League was developed by USVBA administrators Kerry Klosterman, Doug Beal and Bill Neville in the mid to late 1980s" (USVBA letter, February 4, 1993).

While the ABA and WHA had the National Basketball Association (NBA) and National Hockey League (NHL) as models, O'Hara's ITA had no such blueprint. "We were the prototype," he said (M. O'Hara, personal communication, January 27, 1992). While the attraction of turning professional existed most other sports, track appeared to have a significant number who feared the risk.

Although O'Hara's prior experience to track and field operations and logistics was limited, he was dedicated to improving upon two failed attempts at a pro track tour between 1968-71: the National Track and Field Association (NTFA) and the Professional Track Association (PTA). A model utilized in Australia was also examined by O'Hara (O'Hara, et al., 1973).

Most recently, O'Hara has aided the Olympic movement in six different game functions: national olympic committee chair, network television commentator, organizing committee chair, international sports federation commissioner, as well as an athlete. He contributed in the production of the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Initially, O'Hara served as executive director of all 23 Olympic sports. In addition, from 1989-91, he served as vice president of television broadcasting representing 153 countries. O'Hara also has contributed as a consultant to the Seoul, Calgary and Barcelona Olympic organizing committees (Congressional Record, 1991).

O'Hara's latest sporting endeavor, as one of three founding owners, is the World Corporate Games - Summer and Winter Olympics for men and women amateur athletes around the world. After four years of competition (1987-91), the

event boasted 7,000 entrants in the 1991 edition, which was staged in Lille, France (Congressional Record, 1991).

O'Hara's company, O'Hara Enterprises International (OEI), enjoys the distinction of having pioneered more college, professional and Olympic sporting endeavors than any company in history. OEI helped establish professional sports leagues in basketball, hockey and volleyball and created the professional track concept that produced 50 meets in five countries on three different continents. (Congressional Record, 1991)

Brian Oldfield

Without question, one of the most outspoken personalities of the ITA, Brian Oldfield's hulking 6 ft., 5 in. and 280-pound frame is only half the story behind the 1972 Olympic shot putter. O'Hara described Oldfield to Kirkpatrick (1975): "Our own monster creation" (p. 63). The ITA's 1973 souvenir program described him: "Oldfield is definitely a non-conformist. Generally dressed in tie dyes and red swimming briefs, he is readily identified by a loud Tarzan-like scream when putting." Steiner's words complemented O'Hara's definition of Oldfield:

I've never met anyone quite as big. and I don't mean in the strict physical sense. Brian's ego is big, his personality is big. His appetites, individualism, capacity for life, his style, but none are as totally animalistic. And that's a compliment. My sociology teacher once told me mankind took a quick jump from savagery to barbarianism with just a short stop at civilization in between. I think Brian hit the stop for just a second. That must be what it takes to be the best shot putter in history. (Kirkpatrick, 1975, p. 63)

Rarely at a shortage for words, Oldfield told Kirkpatrick " with characteristic self-effacement, 'When God invented man, he wanted to him to look like me.' " His "body deserves to be a conversation piece, if only because it is a cross between the blocky hulk of a defensive tackle and the muscle delineation of a Mr. Marvelous Spa contestant" (p. 63). Though his weight is between 270 and 280 pounds, Oldfield's waist is only 37 inches, which makes him appear 50 pounds lighter than he is. Most of this weight is evenly distributed through his arms and

shoulders, legs and thighs. "Has there ever been another 280-pounder who could run the 100-yard dash in 10.3 seconds," Kirkpatrick asked (1975, p. 63).

Born on June 1, 1945 in Elgin, IL (Hanley, 1973), Oldfield revolutionized the shot-put, utilizing the spinning arc of a discus thrower through a full turn and a half (540 degrees). He broke the world indoor record with a heave of 72 ft., 6.5 in. on April 4, 1975 at the San Francisco Cow Palace. On May 10, 1975 in the Bowie High School stadium at El Paso, he unloaded three puts which broke the world record, the final toss of 75 ft. bettering the old mark by nearly a yard. Oldfield said,

I've already thrown three feet beyond incredible. I'll be throwing 80 feet, 85, maybe 90, and all those little glamour milers with their myth four-minute barrier will be like little puppies, trite little tikes, and the rest of the track and field world will be obsolete, and then people will notice shot-putters - the real athletes, the real men. (Kirkpatrick, 1975, pp. 63-64)

Oldfield's style seem to attract the media wittiest words. "A chap who admits a hankering for booze and butts," described Reid (1973) at the ITA's second meet in Los Angeles (p. 25). After winning the shot-put competition with a toss of 68 ft., 4.25 in., the hulking weight man said, "I'm training more consistently now. Instead of the cocktail hour, I go to practice, then to the cocktail hour" (p. 25). He also recognized himself as a test case. "The money mongers are hanging around now talking up deals. Deals for Oldfield to play for the Miami Dolphins, to fight Muhammed Ali, to get into books, records, condominiums and to do everything but ride Foolish Pleasure over Snake River Canyon" (p. 63). Fellow shot putter and friend of Oldfield, Randy Matson told Kirkpatrick (1975),

Brian's crazy living takes away from the public's knowledge of his ability as an athlete. The first question they ask is whether his style is legal. But nothing's ever been wrong with it. He holds the ball high enough, he's not hitting the rim of the circle and he's sure not cheating on the weight of the thing. Nobody's going to slip a light shot on me. (p. 65)

"Oldfield's rapport with the (ITA) constituency ... reached such a point that he (could) trade ethnic slurs in good humor, offering friendly exclamations such as 'Get down, darkies' with no hint of racism intended or taken" (Kirkpatrick, p. 67). Sprinter John Smith told Kirkpatrick, "He takes the time to deal with us. He's always joining card games or coming over to chitchat. Ryun never comes over. Seagren never comes' " (p. 67). Long jumper Henry Hines said, "Brian doesn't act like most white dudes who, trying to be cool and nice to us, end up silly. He's a brother - one of us" (p. 67). Describing Oldfield's personality, Kirkpatrick (1975) said,

Oldfield's tendency to be natural and totally out front, to wear his heart on his sleeve along with a few well-chosen epithets, sometimes has the officialdom of ITA, a struggling organization if there ever was one, on pins and needles. Oldfield is the personification of Hercules Unchained; he will say and do anything he pleases. (p. 68)

"I'm going to make this sport, make it so that little kids are throwing the shot someday to be like me," Oldfield vowed. "I'm 30. I'll be around another 10 years at \$50,000 per. O'Hara's got to pay me that" (Kirkpatrick, 1975, p. 63).

Bob Hayes

Nicknamed "The Bullet," Bob Hayes is generally conceded to be the fastest man ever to run track from the early to mid 1960s. "His two-tenth victory in the Tokyo Olympics in the 1964 was the widest margin of victory in Olympic sprint history up until that era. The first man to run 9.1, Hayes did it four times in his career" (ITA program, 1973).

The ITA's feature attraction in its "King of the Hill" 40-yard dash, Hayes dominated the circuit's footballer distance. Regarded as the greatest short sprinter of his era, from 1961 through 1964, he won 44 out of 46 races at 100 yards and 100 meters. Both defeats came a week apart when he was weakened by intestinal flu. Competing in the 1964 Olympics, and in his last individual race, he won the Olympic 100-meter gold medal. He also anchored the US team to

victory in the 400-meter relay, covering his 100-meter leg in an unofficial 8.8 seconds. Born on December 20, 1942 in Jacksonville, FL (Hanley, 1973), he went to make All-Pro four times as a wide receiver, led the NFL in punt returns in 1967. In his seven-year NFL career, he made 321 catches for 6,600 yards, averaging more than 20 yards per reception. He also played in three Pro Bowls (ITA souvenir program, 1975).

An example of Hayes' high-profile character was perhaps best typified in his return to Tokyo on the ITA's 1974 overseas tour. "Hayes' return was even more triumphant than a hero of the 1964 Olympics had a right to expect," said Bert Nelson, the Editor and Publisher for *Track & Field News* (1974, p. 7). The first of the ITA's touring professionals to arrive, "Hayes was mobbed at the air terminal. They told me 10,000 fans were there and I believe it. It took me three hours to get out of the airport. They had to cancel two press conferences because I couldn't get there in time" (B. Nelson, 1974, p. 7). Hayes was unable to match his all-conquering ways of almost 10 years ago, losing a close one to Colorado star Cliff Branch. Branch's clocking of 4.95 seconds in the 40-meter dash gave him an 0.04 margin of victory.

Bob Seagren

Like Ryun, controversy surrounded the Olympic career of pole vaulter Bob Seagren. A 1968 Olympic gold medalist, the University of Southern California graduate was foiled in his gold medal defense at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. Newly crowned as world record holder (18 ft, 5 3/4 in); for the fifth time), Seagren was the odds-on-favorite to repeat as the Olympic champion. Controversy over which poles were to be allowed began mid-summer, with the decision that carbon poles, such a variety used by Seagren and other world-class vaulters, were to be banned during the Games (Hanley, 1973). Then the ban was lifted, and a few days before the actual preliminary competition at Munich, the

ban was reinstated. Although Seagren performed admirably with a pole he had never used before, he was forced to settle for the silver medal behind East Germany's Wolfgang Nordwig (ITA souvenir program, 1973).

Despite what proved to be a controversial climax to an otherwise prosperous amateur career, Seagren bolted for a chance to compete in the professional ranks and was one of the first core of athletes to turn professional. Born on October 17, 1946 in Fullerton, CA (Hanley, 1973), Seagren bolstered his overall athletic credibility by capturing the 1973 Superstars competition at Rotunda, FL. At the end of the two-day competition, Seagren outdistanced a talented field of professional athletes and won the first place prize of \$39,700. Included in the field were: future Hall of Famers Johnny Bench, catcher for the Cincinnati Reds, and Johnny Unitas, quarterback for the Baltimore Colts and San Diego Chargers; downhill skier Jean Claude Killy, a triple-crown gold medalist; boxer Joe Frazier, former world heavyweight champion; Elvin Hayes, standout center for the Washington Bullets; Peter Revson, professional auto racer; Rod Laver, professional tennis player; and Stan Mikita, center man for the Chicago Black Hawks hockey team (Levin, 1973).

Seagren's bitter rivalry with ITA teammate Steve Smith produced sparks which provided the professional tour further competitive attraction. A 1972 Olympic teammate of Seagren and a former indoor world record holder in the pole vault, the brash Smith was outspoken concerning the dislike the two had for one another. Smith said, "I hate him (Seagren). He's a great athlete and I admit he's good. The competition helps me. Hating him helps me too" (ITA souvenir program, 1974).

Ben Jipcho

A one-man wrecking crew in the ITA during the 1974 and '75 seasons, Jipcho emerged from the shadow of Kenyan Olympic teammate Kip Keino to single-handedly dominate the professional tour distance events during the 1974 and '75 campaign. Born on March 1, 1943 (Hanley, 1973), Jipcho took the 1972 Olympic silver medal in the 3,000-meter steeplechase behind Keino. In 1973, he twice within a nine-day period broke the world record for the steeplechase (8:19.8 and 8:14.0). Slightly more than two weeks later, he ran the second fastest mile in history (3:52.0).

Interestingly, the ITA tour provided an ideal scenario for athletes like Jipcho, who might not have been able to cope with the rigors of the amateur circuit. The drawback, however, was the financial rewards were nowhere near as great. Nonetheless, Jipcho outwardly appeared content with the ITA.

So far this (1974) season, after winning 14 of 16 races, some at two miles, he has banked \$7,950, which, he figures, is just a little more than half what he could make in one weekend in Europe as an amateur. 'To be truthful, you can make much more as an amateur,' he said. 'For a meeting - no, a single race, I made \$4,000. Sometimes if I ran three times in a meeting, I'd make \$12,000 in a weekend. After two weeks in Europe, I could take home \$24,000.' He drained a glass of milk and then grinned. 'That's U.S. dollars. And it was tax free.' (Putnam, p. 69)

Reid (1975) said Jipcho's dominance hurt the ITA's overall credibility. He explained: "pro track still has its problems, one of them in the person of its most durable performer. His name is Ben Jipcho and the problem is he wins too many races against overmatched rivals" (p. 58). With tough competition, the exception rather than the norm, Jipcho has won 24 of 26 races as a pro, usually at the rate of two a meet, most often at one miles and two miles. "The victories, a remarkable testimony to Jipcho's skill and stamina, made him ITA's leading money winner last year with \$16,700" (p. 58). Unfortunately, Jipcho's workload precluded him from running the world-record times that the fans, to say nothing of

O'Hara, would like to see. "Running for money doesn't make you fast," the pragmatic Kenyan said, "it makes you run first" (p. 58).

Nonetheless, Jipcho's performances from his debut in 1974 saved the ITA from potential embarrassment. In the ITA's 1974 season opener at New York City's Nassau Coliseum, Jipcho captured both the two-mile (8:34) and mile (4:03.4), saving the ITA from considerable embarrassment as three ITA high jumpers failed to clear 6-10 in the meet while three of six distance runners failed to break 8:50 in the two-mile. Amdur (1974) posed several questions facing the ITA in its second season:

Will spectators be satisfied to see a pro run a 300-yard race slower than a schoolboy, which is what happened in a comparison of times at the Coliseum's pro and scholastic meets? Does it really make any difference to the spectator how fast or how slow a race is run at the pro level, as long as it's interesting or competitive? (p. 3)

Challenging Jipcho's work ethic emphasizing "quantity, not quality" Amdur warned the concern for the ITA's future. Amdur's argument frequently circled back to the point of the need for world-class performances. Jipcho running roughshod day-in and day-out, completely dominating ITA's distance events without record performances, was frequently a topic addressed in articles by Amdur (*New York Times*) and Reid (*Sports Illustrated*).

Wyomia Tyus

Wyomia Tyus was the first woman in Olympic history to win the 100 meters twice. Tyus duplicated her feat of four years earlier in Tokyo with a victory in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, posting a record time of 11.0. Also a member of the winning 1968 Olympic gold medal 400-meter relay team, Tyus also established a world record in 1965 for the 100-yard dash with a time of 10.3 (Hanley, 1973).

Born on August 29, 1945 in Griffin, GA, Tyus captured no less than 24 straight ITA dashes. Her chief ITA rival was former Olympic teammate Barbara

Ferrell, a 1968 silver medalist in the 100 meters and also a member of the U.S. women's winning 400-meter relay (Hanley, 1973). In the absence of other women's events, the Tyus-Ferrell rivalry was the extent of any true competition in the women's side of the tour.

The following represents a comprehensive listing of staff, advisory committee members, and athletes who participated in one form or another during the life of the ITA (see Appendix F). As can be seen from the names and personalities, the ITA did not look for name "recognition." The extent of meaningful participation by many of the personalities is questionable.

ITA Staff

Michael O'Hara, President
 Jack Butefish, Executive Vice President
 Charles Nelson, Controller
 Liliana Nelson, Controller
 Mark Alder, Controller
 Jim Terrill, Director of Operations
 Otis Cross, Director of Personnel, Advertising and Promotion Consultant
 Earl McCullouch, Director of Personnel
 Wayne Vandenburg, Director of Personnel
 Al Franken, Director of Promotions
 John Stevenson, Director of Promotions
 Bob Steiner, Director of Public Relations
 Mark Lookabaugh, Assistant Director of Public Relations
 Eileen Federman, Secretary to the President

Advisory Committee

Rafer Johnson, ITA Advisory Chairman, Sullivan Award winner, 1960 Olympic champion
 Rink Babka, U.S. Olympian
 Dick Bank, International Track Expert
 Bob Briner, Sports Consultant
 James Bush, Head Track Coach/UCLA
 Morris Chalfen, President/Holiday on Ice
 James Coote, European Track Expert
 Gary Davidson, President/World Hockey Association
 John Dewar, President/John Dewar & Sons, Ltd.
 James Dunaway, International Track Expert
 Ivan Goff, Motion Picture Producer/Paramount Studios
 Bob Hersh, International Track Expert

Mark McCormack, President/International Management Group
 George Moore, President/Pacer American
 Max Muhleman, President/Max Muhleman & Co.
 Bert Nelson, Editor & Publisher/Track and Field News
 Vince Reel, International Track Expert
 Donald Regan, League Attorney/World Hockey Association
 Wilbur Ross, Consultant/U.S. Department of Commerce
 Jim Ryun, Three-time Olympian, World Record Holder/1,500 meters, one-mile and half-mile run
 Samuel Skinner Jr., Sports Writer
 Wayne Vandenburg, Track Consultant
 Verne Wolfe, Head Track Coach/University of Southern California
 Dave Wolper, Motion Picture Producer/Wolper Productions
 Alex Woodley, Track Coach/Philadelphia Pioneer Clubs

ITA's top-credentialed Olympic level performers

Jim Ryun - A 1968 Olympic silver medalist, 1,500-meter run; former world record holder for 1,500 meters, mile and half-mile
 Ben Jipcho - 1972 Olympic silver medalist, steeplechase
 Bob Seagren - 1968 Olympic gold medalist, 1972 Olympic silver medalist, pole vault. Former world record holder (18-5.75). Superstars champion.
 Brian Oldfield - Former world record-holder, indoor shot put; 1972 Olympian
 Wyomia Tyus - 1964 and '68 Olympic gold medalist, 100-meter dash
 Bob Hayes - Two-time Olympic gold medalist (1964), 100-meter dash and 400-meter relay. Former world record holder, 100 yards (9.1)
 Dave Wottle - 1972 Olympic gold medalist and former world record-holder, 800 meters
 Lee Evans - Two-time Olympic gold medalist (1968), 400-meter dash and 1,600-meter relay. Former world record-holder, 400 meters (43.8, 1968-88).
 Steve Smith - 1972 Olympian, pole vault; former indoor world record holder
 Randy Matson - Olympic gold medalist (1968), Olympic silver medalist (1964), shot put; former world record holder
 Larry James - Olympic gold medalist (1,600-meter relay) and silver medalist (400 meters), 1972 Games
 Vince Matthews - 1972 Olympic gold medalist, 400 meters; 1968 Olympic gold medalist, 1,600-meter relay
 Henry Hines - World's top-ranked long jumper in 1973
 Jim Hines - Two-time Olympic gold medalist, 100 meters and 400-meter relay, 1968 Games
 Barbara Ferrell - Olympic gold medalist (400-meter relay), silver medalist (100 meters), 1968 Games
 Kip Keino - Two-time Olympic gold medalist, two-time Olympic silver medalist (1968 and '72); former world record holder, steeplechase
 Rod Milburn - 1968 Olympic gold medalist, 110-meter high hurdles
 Bob Beamon - 1968 Olympic gold medalist, long jump; former world record holder (1968-91, 29 ft., 2.5 in)

John Carlos - 1968 Olympic gold medalist, 400-meter relay; bronze medalist, 200 meters

Dick Fosbury - 1968 Olympic gold medalist, high jump

Dave Hemery - 1968 Olympic gold medalist, 400-meter intermediate hurdles; 1972 Olympic bronze medalist, 400-meter hurdles. Former world record-holder (48.1)

(Source: ITA souvenir programs, *Track & Field News*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Runner's World* magazines, *New York Times*)

The ITA athletes bearing Olympic gold or silver medals, or world class prowess gave the ITA its strongest identity and recognition, although its advisory committee had many well-known individuals from the various sports, entertainment and business markets. While some athletes were better known than others, it is acknowledged that there were many whose influence on the ITA was "meaningful" in one form or another.

A 1964 US Olympic volleyball player in Tokyo, O'Hara was more than just a sports promoter, he also helped financially package whole leagues. He was a financial adviser and founder of the American Basketball Association (ABA) and World Hockey Association (WHA). His goal was not only to make professional track competitive, but also more fan appealing, arranging the meet format in stepladder fashion to spotlight each event and its competitors. Most meets included 10 men's events and two women's events ("Run for," March 26, 1973, p. 70).

(The) ITA isolates each of its events and spotlights individual performers. A shot-putter, for instance, is required to wait before a throw if a vaulter is about to try a height. That innovation, which was further enhanced by a time limit on field event tries (30 seconds for shot-putters, 45 for vaulters) may be the best of the ITA's improvements, but the Minidome crowd grooved over the use of the electronically timed pacers lights fixed to the 220-yard track at 10-yard intervals. (Reid, 1973, p. 64)

O'Hara (1973) said, "Our whole philosophy is to put the bulk of our money into prize money. In that way, the athletes who do the best make the most money" (p. 11). Due to the less-than-dynamic personality traits of many ITA athletes, O'Hara included specific instructions to improve the athletes' rapport with the fans.

To please fans, the ITA's eleven-page operations manual frankly encourage(d) troupe members to ham it up: Wave during introductions, smile, turn to all side of the arena and acknowledge the applause. Many athletes act glum as if they are about to be shot in the next minute. (Randy) Matson, the world record holder (71 ft., 5 1/2 in.) in the shot put, but a rather colorless performer, recognized the problem. (He said), If everyone was like me, nobody would come out and watch. ("Run for," 1973, p. 70)

"In pursuit of his goal, O'Hara put \$100,000 of his own, and (\$500,000) from nine investors, into the venture" (Arnold, p. 1; M. O'Hara, personal communication, February 3, 1993). While finding investors wasn't difficult, putting together a management team required the bulk of O'Hara's selling ability. He enlisted former Olympic decathlon champion Rafer Johnson to chair the ITA

advisory committee. He also garnered the talents of Max Muhleman, who negotiated WHA's TV contracts; Morris Chalfen, founder of *Holiday on Ice*; plus four experts on running meets - Stanford Coach Payton Jordan, Bert Nelson, publisher of *Track & Field News*; USC's Vern Wolfe and Amherst's Jim Terrill (Jares, 1972). Despite its numerous high-profile individuals, the exact extent of the advisory committee's influence is unknown. O'Hara's staff members in the ITA's inaugural season included: Jack Butefish, executive vice-president; Chuck Nelson, controller; Jim Terrill, director of operations; Otis Cross Jr., director of personnel; Al Franken, director of promotions; and Eileen Federman, secretary to the president (ITA souvenir program, 1973).

Interestingly, although O'Hara was "successful" in a business sense, "when it came time to approach the athletes [to join the tour, many] had never heard of him, his projects and his volleyball exploits" (Jares, 1972, p. 40). He sought Villanova star Marty Liquori to run for the ITA. Working on his masters degree in broadcasting at the University of Florida, Liquori instead talked himself into the announcing job (Jares, 1972).

The professional track tour brought its share of controversy from the amateur world. Although supportive of the concept, Villanova coach Jim Elliott was pessimistic. "It has two chances, slim and none." Wolf, who later joined O'Hara's advisory committee, said, "They are adventurous people trying to do the impossible" (Jares, 1972). UCLA coach Jim Bush asked, "We have a difficult time making amateur track go with a relatively low cost factor, so how can professional track pay athletes, the expense of renting a facility, the equipment and the officials?" (Jares, 1972, p. 39). Nonetheless, O'Hara remained upbeat despite the odds. "It was an idea whose time had come," he said (Ryun, 1976, p. 40). "We want to make track the primary sport in the world; it was there once" (Jares, 1972, p. 39). O'Hara's "predictions of success (were) bolstered by a

December (1972) Harris Poll that found track and field, thanks partly to last fall's televised Olympics, to be the fifth most popular sport, up from ninth a year ago" (Arnold, 1973, p. 19).

Athletes like Ryun appeared to be ready for the opportunity coming off a disappointing amateur career after being tripped in the semifinals of the 1,500 meters at the Munich Games. Struggling with his allergies and frustrations, Ryun had only \$200 in his checking account when he left Kansas for the 1972 Olympic Trials in Oregon. With his wife, Ann, expecting their second child, "My first thought was, 'Where do I sign?' " said Ryun (Jares, 1972, p. 40). Landing an athlete like Ryun, and later, Kenya's Kip Keino, were prize catches for O'Hara.

I knew I had to get that combination (Ryun and Keino) for our meets, O'Hara said. His reasoning was sound. Ryun's fall in his Olympic 1,500-meter heat almost guaranteed that people would pay to see how he would fare upright, and the dramatic history of the Ryun-Keino races was equally irresistible. (Reid, 1973, p. 24)

For athletes like Randy Matson who achieved the pinnacle of Olympic stardom in the form of an Olympic gold medal and a world record - the ITA provided a catalyst for those battling complacency. The shot putter told O'Hara,

At a time when I should have been at a peak, I didn't have the motivation. When you're an amateur athlete and have a world record and a gold medal, there's really nothing left. My competitive desire had dwindled. But the ITA opened the door for me to continue my track career, and I know I have many more good years. (ITA souvenir program, 1975)

A three-time gold medal winner in the 1964 and 1968 Olympics, the chance to compete and earn income lured Wyomia Tyus out of retirement to run for the ITA. Explaining her decision, she said,

I got very bored and tired being just an amateur. At that time, women were not looked upon as great athletes in America, and that is the reason I stopped. The other reason was that after I graduated from college, I found it suicidal to try to continue running and working. One had to go. Since running was my specialty and I couldn't run and make money, I was very happy pro track came along. (Ryun, 1984, p. 91)

About a dozen athletes received initial signing bonuses in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range. Thirty athletes signed without bonuses. In addition, "the ITA took a 25% to 50% cut from any product-endorsement fees its athletes earn, compared with the 10% to 15% that most professionals pay their agents." Furthermore, the ITA did not provide insurance for its athletes or compensation for injury. One New York agent said, "It's a lousy contract" (Arnold, 1973, p. 1). Amateur shot putter Al Feurbach told Amdur (1973, p. 7),

The one place a track athlete can make a few bucks has been endorsing on shoes. But the ITA has signed a contract with a shoe company and you have to wear those shoes. What about all those guys who've been wearing the same type of shoes for years. Do you think they want to change now?

Arnold (1973, p. 19) reported that "O'Hara managed to stay on the good side of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) by agreeing not to recruit college-eligible athletes and by scheduling ITA so as not to conflict with AAU functions." Despite his efforts to promote an atmosphere of harmony between the ITA and amateur governing bodies, Arnold stated the International Track Federation refused to accept ITA marks as world records. Ryun (1976) said, "Amateur governing bodies were opposed to our existence and discouraged amateur officials from working our meets. They were also afraid we would steal all their stars and corrupt them with money" (p. 41).

Amdur (1973) reported that "the biggest complaints among the athletes who have not signed pro contracts appear to be small bonus incentives and clauses that assure ITA at least 50 per cent of residuals from company-related endorsements" (p. L7). Defending his decision, O'Hara told Amdur, "What's good for ITA, both from endorsements and prize money, ultimately will benefit the

athletes, who have never had an opportunity to cash in on their track and field talent" (p. L7).

A 1968 Olympic 400-meter gold medal winner, Lee Evans had his contract revised prior to the ITA opener in Pocatello, ID after learning Jim Ryun and Bob Seagren both signed five-figure contracts. Earning a \$65,000 bonus according to some sources (Brower, 1976), Ryun's services went beyond those typical of his ITA peers. In addition to the role of an athlete, he served on the ITA's Advisory Committee, as well as a tour promoter and spokesman. A 1968 Olympic gold and bronze medalist, John Carlos was a freelance track and field professional and competed for the ITA on a part-time basis only, never signing an ITA contract. The friction and bitterness stemmed from Carlos' feeling of self-worth and monetary worth, which differed from what O'Hara viewed as Carlos' market value. Well-known for his militant black salute in the 1968 Olympics awards ceremony, Carlos told Brower (1976, p. 41): "O'Hara gives Jim Ryun \$65,000 as a bonus for signing and he offers me \$6,000. I thought my name was just as well known as Jim Ryun's. I've done just as much as him, and I wanted to be compensated with some decent money. And he wouldn't go for it."

Choosing to remain optimistic, Evans told Amdur (1974, p. L7) in a *New York Times* story, "Sure, there a lot of things wrong. But this is going to be a lot better, I hope, than the AAU tour and at least it will give some of us a chance to cash in - better than it was before" (p. L7). A 1972 400-meter Olympic gold medalist, sprinter Vince Matthews was initially offered a bonus less than Evans (Matthews & Amdur, 1974), the 1968 Olympic 400-meter champ who made the 1972 Olympic team only as a member of the 1,600-meter relay. Along with U.S. silver medalist Wayne Collett, Matthews was criticized for failing to stand at attention during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner at Olympics awards ceremony in Munich (Hanley, 1973). Like Carlos, both runners were banned from

future Olympic competition by the International Olympic Committee for their "protest" (Matthews & Amdur, 1974, p. 391).

Manhattan attorney Norman Berkowitz, negotiated a new deal for Matthews, a three-year contract at double the bonus money that was originally offered (p. 392-393). Commenting on O'Hara's personality and charisma, Matthews said,

O'Hara can be a very persuasive individual. He doesn't come off as a typical sports hustler, out for an easy buck. He's tall, lanky and looks like the kind of self-effacing guy who has read all the books on positive thinking, digested the contents and then sprinkled in some of his values. He's a good listener, who always notes anything significant in a little black book, which made me recall my own diaries and Thought Books from a few years before. (Matthews & Amdur, 1974, p. 390)

The cases of Evans and Matthews were examples of the difficulties the ITA management had attracting amateur and professional athletes, with signing bonuses the crux of the problem. In the weeks prior to the ITA's inaugural opener in Idaho, Amdur (1973) said "the status of some of America's top track and field athletes may be moving around like a revolving door - from amateur to pro and, perhaps after a belated visit to an attorney, back to amateur again" (p. L1). Sprinter Mel Pender was critical of the ITA's signing policies. Pender told Amdur (1973), "They're shortchanging the black athletes. All the big bonus money has gone to the white cats and they're asking the black athletes to sign for next to nothing" (p. L7).

The case of sprinter Martin McGrady typified the differences regarding bonuses between management and the athletes (Amdur, 1973, p. L1). The indoor world record-holder for the 600-meter dash, McGrady rescinded a verbal commitment to join the ITA after learning Evans received a \$6,000 signing bonus, twice the amount O'Hara offered McGrady (M. O'Hara, personal communication, February 3, 1993). Nicknamed "Chairman of the Boards," McGrady's attitude was in large part due to the fact he had beaten Evans in three out of four heats of

600-yard dash in head-to-head competition in 1970. In that series, McGrady and Evans tied for the world record before McGrady lowered the mark twice more before establishing a record of 1:07.6 that lasted 22 seasons (Hendershott, 1992).

Kenya's Kip Keino, a two-time gold Olympic medalist, was one of the few exceptions (Amdur, 1973). The African distance runner was believed to have signed a three-year \$27,000 bonus contract (Amdur, 1973). An unidentified ITA official said the figure was as high as \$48,000 (Amdur, 1973). According to O'Hara, the ITA lost a potential front-page cover story in *Sports Illustrated* in February 1973 when signing Keino, who initially balked at the idea of becoming a professional. "We were slated for a front-cover story, but when Oregon State beat UCLA for a second time that season, we lost our chance of being on the cover. It would have been a big boost to our credibility if we could made the *Sports Illustrated* cover" (M. O'Hara, personal communication, February 3, 1993).

Despite the ITA's hardships of getting underway, "This is an idea whose time has come," said Bert Nelson, the *Track & Field News* Editor and Publisher, acting as a peacemaker. "I think we should give it a chance" (Jares, 1972, p. 47).

1973: Early operations of the ITA

Announced by O'Hara at the close of the 1972 Olympic Games, the ITA was born on October 25, 1972 and initiated its first season on March 3, 1973 in Idaho State University's Minidome at Pocatello, ID before 10,480 fans ("10,400 fans," 1973, p. L42). Some promotional aspects of the ITA opener were ridiculous, according to Ryun. Expressing his doubts, he said.

I'd been slated for a high-publicized special solo 1,500 meters that was billed as a record attempt - at 4,500 feet no less! Realizing how laughably absurd this was, I nevertheless complied. Of course, I came no where close. I don't recall my time, but I doubt it was under 4:05 pace. The crowd loved it, however. (Ryun & Phillips, 1984, p. 175)

Ryun was clocked at 3:50.3 in the solo race which was paced by the electric light, 12.5 seconds off the world record. (Nonetheless), Reid (1973) said the "crowd grooved over the use of the electronically timed pacer lights fixed to the 220-yard track at 10-yard intervals" (p. 64).

The lights gave Ryun a deceptive triumph of man over candlepower... - the fans had not been informed that Ryun's lights were set for 62-second quarters, and they assumed he was running at world-record pace. Ryun, who was timed at a poky 3:50.3, could be forgiven though, even ignoring the fact that it was Marty Liquori's job as emcee to keep the crowd abreast of such things. Three days before the meet Ryun's wife Anne gave birth to twin sons (Andrew Monroe and Nathaniel Charles) in Santa Barbara, and James Ronald [Ryun] had had some sleepless nights. (p. 64)

Despite its shortcomings, the ITA opener at Pocatello was in essence, a "dress rehearsal." The Pocatello meet was site where the ITA unveiled new innovations and format. Three world indoor records fell in the meet. Warren Edmonson was clocked at 10.2 for the 100 meters, eclipsing the old standard of 10.3. Lee Evans broke the 1969 world mark owned by Great Britain's Martin Bilham's of 1:17.7 for the 600 meters by producing a winning time of 1:16.7. John Radetich broke Soviet Valery Brumel's 1961 high jump record of 7 ft., 4 5/8 in. with a leap of 7 ft. 4 3/4 in ("10,400 fans," 1973). The concept of paying track athletes to compete like their professional peers in football, baseball and basketball, still remained a shock to the system of many sports enthusiasts. Reid (1973) summed the ITA's opening night, which grossed \$30,000 and ended 45 minutes behind schedule:

There were some goofs, of course, and other stuff too slick or slack for the track nut, but the mishaps should be corrected by the time Mike O'Hara, the outfit's entrepreneur, assembles his full cast on the boards in 18 other cities between now and June 6. And as for the outrageous spectacle of the saintly track man actually taking money over the table, the public will be more offended by Sesame Street. (p. 64)

One of the best endorsements for ITA following the Pocatello meet came from a runner who wish(ed) to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals. He said, "I

don't think the idea of not being able to win a gold medal in the Olympics is the thing that has kept guys from turning pro. Runners really don't think much about gold medals, but of having a place to run. I don't look at the ITA as the opportunity to make some money. Track's been an art that has been stagnated by its amateur status" (Reid, 1973, p. 67). But as attractive as the opportunity of turning professional sounded to many, there were many equally as skeptical, including a member the ITA troupe, meet announcer Marty Liquori. An 1972 Olympic 1,500-meter contender before being sidelined by an injury, Liquori opted to retain his amateur status, but offered instead his services to O'Hara to serve as meet emcee.' Liquori told Bob Arnold (1973, p. 19) of the *Wall Street Journal*.

For one thing, they made the mistake of paying me too much to be the emcee. Besides, if you added up what I could make in pro track over the next four years, then compared that with a 1976 Olympic gold medal, it just wouldn't come out even.

Capturing the "hearts and pocketbook of rustics," the ITA hoped to "capture the sophisticates" on the tour's first major test of the world's scrutiny came three weeks later. A crowd of 12,280, paying \$58,600, turned out on March 24 for the ITA's second meet held at the Los Angeles Sports Arena, "but, by and large, their hearts but feebly throbbed" (Reid, 1973, p. 24). For the eighth time in seven years, Ryun and Keino hooked up in the mile as the meet's keynote event. The pair "waged many a classic race over a mile's worth of running track" (Reid, 1973, p. 24). "Their meeting (this time) wasn't one of these. It wasn't classic, it wasn't even classy and it nearly wasn't a mile" (Reid, 1973, p. 25).

"To hype the gate, Keino said it possible that the world indoor record would be broken when he and Ryun chased the pacer lights," which were synched at a 59-second per quarter. The indoor record was 3:56.4. Neither runner was ready for a race of 1,600 yards, Reid (1973, pp. 24-25) observed that Ryun chased

Keino from the beginning and finished 10 yards behind his Kenyan rival, who posted a winning time of 4:06.

Despite their acclaimed professionalism, the meet officials were no better than their bumbling amateur counterparts. The starter fired his pistol for the gun lap with two laps to go, and Keino approached the finish line he was waved for another go around. As he predicted, Ryun kicked through the last three laps, but he had yielded too much early ground to catch the bushed Kenyan. "I just jogged the last lap, said Keino. I didn't have any momentum" (Reid, 1973, p. 25).

"Had the mile been the only gaffe of the evening," said Reid, "the meet might have got rave reviews" (p. 25). But as Reid (1973) predicted following the Pocatello ITA opener, "according to the laws that dictate such things, new ventures chasing after a piece of the action in professional sports should be prepared for foul-ups, crowds of 543 and wise guys saying, 'I told you so' " (p. 64). Poor race management resulted in a fiasco in both the 500-meter dash and the 60-yard dash. Like the mile, the 500 featured a ballyhooed match-up, boasted two 400-meter Olympic gold medalists, 1968 champion Lee Evans and 1972 winner Vince Matthews, as well as 1968 silver medalist Larry James. Attempting to break the indoor record for the 500, Evans' bid for Mal Whitfield's 1953 record of 1:02.9 was "bollixed by a tape that graced the finish line one lap too early. " Fully aware he was a lap shy, Evans threw the tape aside and kept running. James and Matthews, who thought the race was over, stopped. Evans missed the record by a second" (p. 25).

The other guys should have known that the race wasn't over that soon, Evans said. The trouble was that when it happened the crowd went blank and didn't help pull me along the way a crowd has to when you're going for a world record. (Reid, 1973, p. 25)

In the 60-yard dash, Reid (1973) reported Warren Edmonson was picked the winner over Mel Pender and Jean-Louis Ravelomanantsoa "since a photo

showed his head crossed the finish line first and, according to ITA rules, heads, not torsos count." Pender protested, claiming he didn't know about the head-first rule. A suggestion that the \$500 prize money be split caused Edmonson to retort, "I knew about the rule. It was published in a lot of papers and therefore I think I won" (p. 25). Yale student Peter Diamond flew to Los Angeles for the ITA meet. His initial impression was one of enthusiasm, but soon degenerated as the meet went forward. He told *Runner's World's* Joe Henderson,

I was quite excited at first. When the lights dimmed and the spotlight focused on Marty Liquori, I felt like I was attending the first night of a Broadway play. But after watching a race with braless stewardesses, I asked myself, Where has the dignity of track gone? I'm not against professional track by any means. I think the best athletes should be paid. But I want the meets to have dignity. I think fans will pay to see straight track and field... but maybe I'm wrong. (Henderson, 1973, pp. 20-21)

"It was really a lousy meet because of all the technical errors," recalled Terrill. "Howard Cosell had Jim Ryun, Kip Keino and O'Hara on television the next morning in Los Angeles. Cosell was very hard on Mike (for the ITA's many technical flaws), but Mike was just eloquent. O'Hara recalled the technical problems he had introducing the ABA and the WHA and remained very bright. He always saw the bright side to a great experience" (J. Terrill, personal communication, February 7, 1992). Commenting on the debut of the ABA and WHA, O'Hara said, "For our opening night in the ABA, the ball was very 'live' because it had a little too much air. The players were somewhat hyper as a result. We had to cancel our WHA opener in Philadelphia because of poor ice conditions. The rink was very wet because it wouldn't freeze properly" (M. O'Hara, personal communication, February 3, 1993).

Described by the media both as an "entrepreneur" (Reid, 1973, p. 64) and an "impresario" (Reid, 1973, p. 24), O'Hara spoke unabashedly of his ITA game plan:

Our whole thrust is toward the sports fan. If we can educate him, stimulate him and interest him, we think we can make ITA. With money on the line, the pressure for the great record is removed. For the sports fan, the first question is always, Who won the money. Nothing we're doing is Biblical, is engraved on stone tablets. We're pioneering. The money so far is not as exciting as we would like it to be, but you've got to start somewhere. (Reid, 1973, p. 67)

Completing its 1973 inaugural tour of 16 meets, the tour fell well shy of its original goal of a 48-meet circuit which O'Hara announced in November 1972 at the ITA's initial press conference in New York City (Amdur, 1972). Ryun, nonetheless, remained confident he made the right choice by joining the professional ranks and that the financial shortcomings would eventually be overcome. Recalling his days of frustrations as an amateur in dealing the Amateur Athletic Union, Ryun was critical of the AAU.

They're so petty. If you won a watch, that was all right as a prize, but one time I won a typewriter. I had to return it because it was worth more than the limit. I really needed one, too. I've had TV sets impounded, too. At another meet I once got a clock-radio, but the AAU told me to return it. I told them if they wanted it, they had to come get it. They never bothered. Their power is based on the Olympics every four years. They certify you for the Olympics and hold it over you. (Anderson, p. 59)

Bob Seagren, the 1968 Olympic gold medalist in the pole vault, experienced similar frustrations with the AAU before turning professional.

As an amateur, when TV shows wanted me, like the 'Tonight' show or a game show, the AAU would ask the show for a \$1,000 donation. That always killed it. It cost me money, maybe \$200 a show, and it cost me exposure. I think I had a lawsuit if I had pushed it. But it's just so much easier not having to worry about that stuff. The problem is that there are new athletes coming under AAU jurisdiction every year who don't realize how they're being used. It takes a couple years to find out. (Anderson, p. 59)

Sprinter Lee Evans soon realized in 1970 what problems AAU jurisdiction could inflict when he competed in a couple European meets.

I was suppose to meet a United States team in Paris, but I paid my way over there to run in meets in Switzerland and Italy on my own before the

