

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

