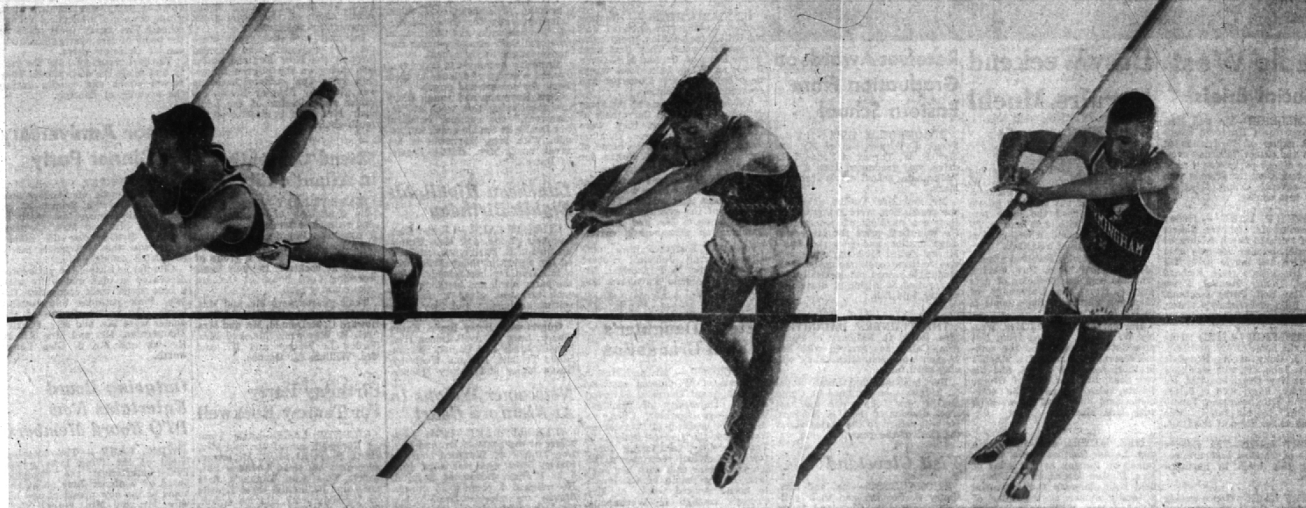


Vaulters Tops on Unbeaten Maple Squad



Bill Alcorn: 11 feet 6 inches Tom Segal: 13 feet 3/4 inch Bill McFarlen: 12 feet 9/4 in.

NEVER has there been a high school in the state of Michigan that could match the performance of three Maple pole vaulters, Bill Alcorn, Tom Segal and Bill McFarlen.

EARLIER this season at U of D relays, they established an average record of 12 feet even, one that should be on record books for a long time to come.

IF YOU TAKE each of their best jumps for the season, 11 feet 6 inches for Alcorn; 12 feet 9/4 inches for McFarlen and 13 feet 3/4 inch for Segal, you come out with a sensational 12 feet 5 1/2 inch average for the track and field trio.

Segal Makes 11th Hour Comeback, Clears 13'

By BOB WEBB, Sports Editor

Tom Segal and Bill McFarlen, both graduating from Birmingham high school, can be considered two of Michigan's greatest high school pole vaulters.

Tom's performance at the Western Michigan A.A.U. meet, a towering 13 feet 3/4 inch vault, should rank him as one of the top 20 high school pole vaulters in the nation this year.

McFarlen, who won the state meet and holds the Eastern Michigan League mark at 12 feet 9/4 inches, tickled the 13 feet bar at the A.A.U. meet just enough to dislodge it.

The two jumpers were joined by Bill Alcorn in the U. of D. relay meet to establish a meet record averaging 12 feet.

A LOOK at the pole vaulting records for the past 15 years provides the perspective to appreciate the accomplishments of the soaring Maple trio.

Back in 1942 Fred Zoellin set the school record at 11 feet 6 1/2 inches. For seven years this record stood on the books until Rollie McGinnis broke it by one inch in 1949, jumping 11 feet 7 1/2 inches.

ANOTHER SEVEN-YEAR gap yawned on the record. In 1956 a gangly youth by the name of Bill McFarlen, a sophomore, cleared the bar at 11 feet and 2 inches. Everyone knew that the record would be in jeopardy the next year.

"Mac" lived up to expectations, setting a new mark at 11 feet 11 1/2 inches at the Eastern Michigan college Huron Relays meet in 1956.

ACTUALLY, HE and a close friend, Tom Segal, had been eyeing the school record since their sophomore days. They bought books on pole vaulting, tried out various techniques and began weight lifting at their homes.

Kermit Ambrose, well-liked and highly respected track coach at Birmingham, drove his two eager enthusiasts to out-state meets. Once, at Chicago, they even met Don Bragg of Villanova and the Reverend Bob Richards, both of whom were clearing the bar at heights greater than 15 feet.

A YEAR AFTER Mac set the school record in the event, Tom Segal soared to a height of 12 feet 6 1/2 inches also at the meet in Ypsilanti.

Segal stands 5 feet 6 inches tall, disproving the theory that only six footers are good timber for the pole vault.

UNFORTUNATELY, after Segal broke the record, he fell victim to a back injury that was to put him on the sidelines for what amounted to the whole balance of the 1957 track season.

He watched Mac go ahead to win every dual meet of the season. McFarlen broke the record again, vaulting 12 feet 8 inches at Albion on May 4 and 12 feet 9 1/4 inches at the Eastern Michigan League meet at Hazel Park on May 22.

"I DON'T SEE how Mac did it that day," said Segal. "The weather was wet, the pole was slippery and the runway was soggy."

The jump set at new E.M.L. record for the pole vault.

In the meantime, profiting from the experience and tutorage of McFarlen and Segal, another star was coming into his own, Bill Alcorn, a 16-year-old junior at Birmingham.

ALCORN, WHO HAD jumped 9 feet 6 inches as a sophomore, cleared the bar at 11 feet 6 inches at the U of D meet to set a three-man record in the event with McFarlen and Segal.

This was just recently at the close of the season. Segal was making a gallant, if painful, return to the event, regardless of his back injury.

AT THE SAME U of D meet, he managed to go up to 12 feet 6 inches, even topping Mac's 12-foot vault at the meet.

The season was over, but in order to give both boys one last chance, Ambrose drove them to Kalamazoo to try out against college competition in the A.A.U. meet there.

IT WAS SEGAL'S last chance at the school record. McFarlen and he both cleared the 12 feet 6 mark at the meet. Then the bar was moved up to 13-feet 3/4 inches.

The next three jumps must have been real heart-breakers for Mac. Each time, he almost cleared the height but tickled the bar with his chest just enough to dislodge it.

SEGAL, WHO HAD been layed up all season because of his back, suddenly found the strength, soared over the bar. It remained up and Segal won and closed the cover on the Birmingham pole vault record while taking second place in the meet.

In discussing the accomplishment, Segal waived aside any personal credit for his success, stating that it was only through his belief in Christ that he was able to gain the strength for the jump. Segal will go on to attend Eastern Michigan university. McFarlen will attend Western Michigan.

BOTH BOYS, incidentally, are good at more things than the pole vault.

Segal threw the shot put 47 feet at the beginning of the season for Birmingham, before his injury. He has been practicing on the javelin and can capture the Eastern Michigan college record if he only improves about three feet in the event.

McFARLEN POLE VAULTED, threw the shot and hurled his way through to take more points than any individual has ever taken in annual track competition for Birmingham high school.

He is the only person to earn more than 100 points, collecting 113 7/12 points to add to his school's fourth consecutive undefeated season in track.

WITH MAC and Tom away at college, Bill Alcorn will be able to walk off with all the firsts in the pole vault next year. The rumor is that there was a wifeful look in his eye at the A.A.U. meet when he happened to look up at the 13 feet bar.

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