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Keeping track of Lamorinda long jumpers

By John T. Miller

Three generations of track and field stars continue to make news in the Lamorinda area.



Monte Upshaw, the patriarch of the family, passed away in July and will be honored next year with a long jump festival. His eldest daughter Joy continues to excel in Masters track and field competition worldwide; a younger daughter Grace - a two-time Olympian in the long jump ('04 and '08) - stays active with private coaching, and Joy's daughter, Acalanes High School grad Windy Margerum, is off to a flying start at UC Berkeley competing in track and field. Joy's eldest daughter Sunny is a former Central Coast Section champion long jumper whose college career at Berkeley was cut short by an Achilles injury.

Windy Margerum shows off her winning medals (left). Margerum in long jump (top right); Monte Upshaw, 1954 (lower right). Photos provided

Joy and Grace, along with their other siblings Chip and Merry, plan to honor their father with a Monte Upshaw Long Jump Festival to be held at Edwards Stadium next year. The event is being planned to coincide with the

Brutus Hamilton Invitational meet on April 27-28. Proceeds will go to benefit the UC Berkeley track program.

The venue is appropriate, since the long jump pit at the stadium is memorialized with a plaque in Monte's name. Monte and Grace Upshaw are the first father/daughter pair inducted to the UC Berkeley track and field Hall of Fame.

The pit is also the scene of three generations of championship performances by the Upshaws and their offspring. In 1954, Monte eclipsed the Olympic great Jessie Owens's national high school record with a jump of 25 feet 4.25 inches. In 2009, at the Brutus Hamilton Invitational, Grace broke the meet and Edwards Stadium record with a jump of 22 feet 3.75 inches. And, more recently, Margerum won the long jump at the North Coast Meet of Champions last year with a personal best 19-foot 1.75-inch jump in that same pit.

The jump put Margerum in second place all-time at Acalanes High School. First place belongs to her aunt, Grace Upshaw, at 19 feet 3 inches. Margerum improved her personal best to 19 feet 5.75 inches in a Berkeley preseason event, and, in addition to track and athletics, she has also jumped into music and dance at the campus.

Joy Upshaw traveled the globe last year, participating in Masters track and field events in Australia, South Korea, Japan, and Canada. She holds numerous American and world records for her age group in hurdles, sprints and relays.

When she's in town, Upshaw runs Joy's Jackrabbits Track Club. The Club meets on Mondays at Acalanes High School. More information is available on the Jackrabbits' website. She is also co-head track coach for Acalanes High School, and recently was named chair of National Exhibition Events for Masters.

"My goal is to show the general track and field public that our Masters can race at any age." She will be coordinating Masters races during National track and field events.

One person Joy would dearly love to recruit to Masters competition would be her sister Grace. The two-time Olympian is busy raising two children (who are also in the Jackrabbits) and is a high performance training coach. Knowing what it takes to reach the highest level of competition, her specialty is working with the high school athlete that is looking to compete in college, as well as collegiate and open athletes that have Olympic aspirations. Masters track may be down the road for her; she says she may start competing when she turns 50.

For now, though, the family will turn their energy toward organizing the Monte Upshaw Long Jump Festival.

"These types of events are very popular in Europe where fans can sit in bleachers very close to the action, whether it be vaulting, jumping or any other event," says Joy Upshaw. "It's super fun and you can feel the great energy. My dad would love it!"

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