

Athletes Who Were Versatile in Multiple Sports by Dale Harder

Hoby Baker, 5'9, 160 lb, Princeton, circa 1915, was the greatest American hockey player, who also played varsity football, baseball, tennis, golf, polo, plus gymnastics, swimming & diving, track, and cross-country. Hobo could walk up and down a flight of stairs on his hands, do a one-arm chinup, and run 100 yards in 10 flat .

Sammy Baugh, Washington Redskin, was just versatile in football but he holds the NFL passing record for the highest average gain in a game with 18.58 yd. per pass when he tossed 24 passes for 446 yd. on Oct. 31, 1948 vs. Boston. Sam also held the NFL record in punting with a 51.4 yd. per punt average in 1940--i.e. 35 punts for 1799 yd. He also co-held the record for the most interceptions in a game, four, as a defensive back, against Detroit, Nov. 14, 1943.

Jim Brown, excelled in the decathlon in college, long before he was a star running back for the Cleveland Browns. He was also a star lacrosse player in addition to his football stardom in college and in the pros. Jim also made a few bucks in the movies.

Tom Cunningham at age 7 had spinal meningitis that left him not only physically deficient but dyslexic. At 11, he started punching a speed bag, and got "really fast". In 1953 he became Golden Gloves boxing champion in Houston. By 1956 he had set two world records in kite flying. In 1957 he became the 2nd best high school boxer in Texas in his weight class. He won the regional high school diving championship, placed 2nd in the state, and won the Gulf Coast AAU 3-meter diving championship.

Texas Tech welcomed Cunningham as a freshman in 1958. Tom won the Southwest Conference tumbling championship, and was 3rd in the still rings in the national meet.

He next became a circus trapeze flier, hand balancer, and juggler. He was the only performer in the Ringling Brothers Circus to juggle 3 balls, turn a standing back flip while 2 balls were still in the air, catch them and keep on juggling.

In 1959 he earned his B.A. in electrical engineering.

From 1960-4 he won 13 straight gymnastic firsts in the still rings. In February, 1964, he was a one-man team representing Sokol Zizka (a Czech organization) in the Oklahoma state championships. He won every single gymnastics event except for a 3rd in the pommel horse. He was an alternate for the 1964 U.S. Olympic team, but broke his neck doing a doubtful flip in August. Tom came back. From 1965-7 he won and placed in the U.S. Gymnastics Fedn., AAU, and YMCA meets. In 1967 he was selected for the 1967 International Invitational held in Mexico City. He was 1st on the rings and 3rd in the floor exercises.

Powerlifting, Olympic lifting, and bodybuilding came next. From 1966-73 at 165 lb he lifted: squat 490, bench press 405, dead lift 660, press 285, snatch 260, and clean & jerk 335, all without using steroids. He won Jr. Mr. Dallas and 3rd in Mr. East Texas. He also did 100 one-arm pushups, 1760 situps in less than an hour, held the iron cross a world's record 78 seconds, and parallel bar dipped with 225 lb extra at 162 bodyweight. He did 13 one-arm chins but was beaten by a female circus performer, Victoria Unis, who did 18.

Tom did stunt man work in the movie *Logan's Run*. In 1976, Tom built the Real-to-Reel recording complex in Dallas and in 1978 he sang, recorded, and mixed his record album, "The #1 Rock n' Roll C&W Boogie Blues Man". It made the top 10 in England. In 1980, Tom did more stunt work for *Semi-Tough*, a movie with Burt Reynolds, and while doing that received a severe hip injury. In 1987, he was still able to do a one-arm planche at the age of 47.

Donald Dinnie SCO, 6'1, 220 lb, was at his peak from 1868 to the 1890s. As a pro athlete he set world pro records in the high jump with 6'1 and the shot put with 49'6. He also carried the

dinnie stones, weighing 340 and 445 pounds respectively, for a distance of about five yards (dragging them part of the way). He also ran the 100y in 10 1/2 seconds, was a top-notch wrestler, and won many medals in the Highland games in Scotland, the United States, and Australia in the caber throw, hammer, weights, and stones, in addition to wrestling.

Paddy Doyle GBR, 5'9,170, became world's fittest man. Here were some of his 130 world, European and other records, 32 of which were *Guinness Book* records 1990-2003. Pushups: 1. 1705 pushups in 1 hour, ER; 2. 4100 pushups + 50# on his back, WR; 3. 7860 pushups nonstop in 3:54, ER; 4. 37,350 pushups in 24 hr, WR; 5. 1,500,230 pushups in a year WR.

One-Arm Pushups: 1. 442 one-arm pushups,10 min, WR; 2. 1328 one-arm pushups, 30 min, WR; 3. 2521 one-arm pushups in 1 hr. WR; 4. 8794 one-arm pushups in 5 hr. WR.

Pushups on Back of Hands: 1. 70 in 1 min; 2. 400 in 15 min; 3. 1303 in 1 hr.

Situps: 1. 152 in 5 min. with 50# on chest, WR; 2. 427 in 15 min. with 50# on chest, WR; 3.1193 in an hour with 50# on his chest, WR; 4. 5000 with 50# on chest in 5 hr. WR.

Running: 1. 5:35 mile carrying 40# weight, WR; 2. 13.1 mile half marathon in 1:59 with 43# back pack; 3. 26.2 mile marathon in 4:42 with 44# back pack; 4. 50 miles in 11:56:22 with 40#.

Karate (full-contact) 251 fighting rounds in 10 days, WR.

World Physical Fitness Challenge on Feb. 16, 2005 setting the WR in 18:56:09 while completing 11 challenges: 20 mile cross trainer, 12 mile run, 12 mile race walk, 2 mile swim, 1250 pushups, 20 mile row, 1250 star jumps, 1250 standing hip flexors, 3250 sit-up crunches, 300,000 lb weightlifting (various lifts), and 110 mile cycle.

Ashton Eaton 6'1, 185 set the world record in the decathlon with 9045 points, won the decathlon in the 2012 Olympics and 2015 World Championships. Played football, basketball, soccer plus track and wrestling in high school. His best PRs: 100m 10.21, 200m 20.76, 400m 45.00, 800m 1:55.90, 1500m 4:14.18, 110H 13.35, 400H 48.69, high jump 6'11, pole vault 17'8 1/2, long jump 27'0, shot put 50'6 1/4, discus 155'4, javelin 218'7.

Major Nate Foster set a world record for lifting the Steyrer Stone (582 lb) to a height of 22 1/4". He was an All-American cross-country runner, yet also totaled 605-370-650 = 1625 lb on the power lifts at 195 bw. He ran a mile in 4:19, and 4:59 in combat boots, did 85 pushups in a minute, 54 situps in 45 seconds, bowled 287 and had a 702 series. (*Powerlifting USA Jan. 78*).

Russ Francis broke the high school javelin record with 254'11 in 1971, which wasn't broken again until 1988. He also starred as a tight end in the NFL.

Robert Gardner was US amateur golf champ in 1909 and 1915. In 1912 he became the first man to pole vault 13'; it was made just before the IAAF approved a higher mark made just seven days later.

Alfred Gilbert, 5'7, 135, quarterbacked his high school football team, won over 100 athletic awards, graduated from Yale, became the 1908 Olympic co-champion in the pole vault, set a 13'1 1/2 unofficial world record (done in an exhibition) on a bamboo pole in 1909, became a medical doctor, did 65 chinups, became famous inventing the erector set, and starting his own company called Gilbert Toys.

Wilfred H. Grenfell GBR (Lord Desborough), Oct. 30,1855 - Jan. 9, 1945 set a school record in the mile with 4:37 that lasted over 60 years. He played cricket against Eton in 1873-74, rowed twice for Oxford vs. Cambridge, stroked a crew of eight across the English Channel, climbed the Matterhorn three times by different routes, twice swam across the Niagara River below the falls, and was an outstanding shot and big game hunter. In the 1906 Olympics he took the silver in fencing with the epee. He also served on the International Olympic Committee, was president of the British Olympic Association, as well as serving on wrestling, fencing, tennis, and cricket associations (Kenny Krey is one source).

Charles Hoff NOR, 6'2, 168, was born in 1902. At 15, he ski-jumped 115', in 1931, he set a professional world record in the pole vault at 14'2, long jumped 25', ran 200m in 21.8, 400m in 49.2, 500m in a WR 1:05.0, 800m in 1:55.9, scored 7629 in the decathlon, but sadly, turned traitor (quisling) in World War II.

Bo Jackson was a great slugger and outfielder for baseball's Kansas City Royals at the same time he was a running back for the Oakland Raiders. Only a serious injury halted his career. According to *Bo Stories* by Jack Etkin, 1990, at McAdory H.S. in Birmingham, AL, Bo ran 100 yd. 9.59, 60H 7.20, TJ 48'7 1/4, HJ 6'9, LJ 22'6 1/4, PV 12', setting a whole slew of state h.s. records including a decathlon of over 6000 points. Later he passed for 80 yd. with claims of up to 130 yd., which sounds way over the top to us. He pitched a baseball 90 mph, threw a man out with a 300' bullet from the outfield, and threw a baseball 450' for distance. Home run distances were many times over 400' with a supposedly measured 554'. He also was supposed to have jumped over a pool table, sideways, from a standing start. He ran 4.16 40y at 235 bodyweight. Howie Long, and other Oakland Raiders teammates said he was the best built guy and fastest runner that they had ever seen.

Thomas Malone IRL/AUS, 160 lb, was born Dec.26, 1853 in Ireland. He excelled in running, hurdling, and jumping. His best times/marks in track & field were: 100 yards 9 3/5, 120y 11 1/2wr, 150y 14 3/5, 220y 21 1/2, 440y 47 3/5, 880y 1:51 1/4, high jump 6'1 1/2, long jump 23'4 1/2, triple jump 48'6, shot put 42'1. He won the Irish championships at 100y and 440y in 1879, the English long jump title in 1882. He went to AUS in 1882 becoming a pro runner. He was a first class shot with rifle and gun at pigeons, a champion quoits player, and outstanding at cricket, soccer, and hurling.

Wilbur Miller, 6'2, 220 deadlifted 725 lb, Olympic pressed 315 lb, snatched 315 lb, clean & jerked 385 lb, totaled 1000 lb on the last three lifts. In high school he lettered in football, basketball and track & field with Kansas offering him a scholarship in track which Wilbur turned down. He had a reputation for a crushing handshake; Gary Deal, a world-class weightlifter, said he once shook Wilbur's hand and learned that the hard way. Wilbur also ran a 4:33.6 mile in high school. What a neat feat to go along with his weightlifting feats.

Elmer Oliphant, 5'8, 178, is a contender for the greatest all-around college athlete. He won 24 college letters--9 at Purdue, and 15 at Army, lettering in seven different sports. He set a world's record for the 220 yard low hurdles on grass with 25.0 in 1915. From 1911-13 he played halfback on Purdue's football team, winning All-Western honors. He sparkled in basketball in 1913-14, and was conference heavy-weight boxing champ. He also excelled in swimming and hockey.

Jackie Robinson was not only the first black major league baseball player, but in college starred in football, basketball, track, tennis and golf.

Deion Sanders hit a major league home run and scored an NFL touchdown, both in the same week in Sept. 1989. Jim Thorpe did this too in 1917 and 1919.

Richard Sorin 6'5, 275, was the first man to close a #3 hand gripper, pinch lifted two old York 45 lb barbell plates, pinch lifted a 100 lb anvil with a 4.38" span, dead lifted by the horns a 180 lb anvil in one hand and 110 lb in the other hand (100 lb anvil + 10 extra lb), pinched three 25 lb plates in one hand while pinching an 80 lb dumbbell by the end in the other, cleaned 400 lb at 227 bodyweight in 1972, lifted an Inch Dumbbell replica (172 lb with 2.47" diameter) several inches off the ground, rolled up a frying pan with his hands (witnessed by Bill Kazmaier), did a 1331 lb dead lift lockout, a hub lift with 80 lb unofficially, crushed 75 lb on the Atlas grip device, and 1-hand pinch lifted 195 lb on G-Rex 621. He also threw the discus in college.

Woody Strode, born in 1914, was 6'4, 215, threw the shot 50', discus 161'10, javelin 200', high jumped 6'5, pole vaulted 11', and ran the mile in 5:00 while at UCLA. (*Track & Field News*, 1971). He also led UCLA along with Jackie Robinson and Kenny Washington to their first undefeated football season in 1939. Daily he performed 1000 pushups (10 sets of 100), 1000 situps, and 1000 squats. He and Washington played semi-pro football for the Hollywood Bears and earned \$1800 in 6 months, big money back then. They then became the first blacks to play in the NFL, in 1946, a year before Robinson became the first black in major league baseball. The Rams dropped him after 1946 when he was getting \$350 a week. However, the Calgary Stampeders gobbled him up for \$500 a week. He achieved a fair amount of fame, working in various action movies. He was also able to do an iron cross, even at age 42, weighing about 205! He also climbed a 20' rope without using his thumbs--he did it for reps.

Woody trained to wrestle professionally in the 50s. Baron Ginsberg, 65, beat him for 8 months until Woody finally could beat him. Then he turned pro. He also practiced archery with a 70 lb bow. He practiced 3 hours a day for 4 months until he could hit a cigarette butt at 100 feet. By age 57, he had dropped his daily regimen to 500 pushups, 500 situps, and 500 squats.

He achieved a fair amount of fame, working in various action movies: *Ten Commandments*, *Spartacus*, *Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, *How the West Was Won*, *The Professionals*, *The Cotton Club*, and was the star in *Sergeant Rutledge*. (Source: *Goal Dust*, 1970, with Sam Young)

Jim Thorpe, 5'11, 184, won the decathlon in the 1912 Olympics, setting a world record. He also won the pentathlon, took 4th in the high jump, and 7th in the long jump. When he played football, in 1912, he scored 25 touchdowns, and 198 points for the year. Later, he played pro football. In baseball he hit three homers in one game and played as a pro. In college basketball he played all five positions well. Jim was also excellent in tennis, handball, gymnastics, figure skating, boxing, wrestling, shooting and swimming. He golfed in the low 80s, and was even intercollegiate ballroom dancing champion. Later, he was an extra in many Hollywood movies.

Bruce Wilhelm, 6'3, 330, won 5th in the 1976 Olympic games as a super-heavyweight lifter. His best snatch was 402 lb, clean & jerk 496, press 405, squat 837 (not in competition), bench press 555 (gym lift), and dead lift 770 (gym lift). He also put the shot 66'9 (68'9 unofficially), discus 182'10 (205'9 in practice), and ran 100 yd. in 10.9 at a bodyweight of 295. He beat Vasily Alexeev, Olympic weightlifting champion and world recordholder, in arm-wrestling. He was the California state high school champ in the shot put and was all-league in wrestling and water polo for two years. Bruce won the World's Strongest Man championship in 1977-78, and served as TV commentator for many weightlifting contests.