

Gothenburg grad hurdles into hall of fame

Written by Deb Egenberger
Thursday, 30 September 2010 01:26 -



Gary Power grew up spending time on his grandparents' farm, delivering newspapers and working in his father's bakery in Gothenburg.

He enjoyed hunting, fishing and hanging out with his friends along with playing football and basketball.

But it was track and field—specifically hurdles—that held Power's passion.

"I can remember going to the track and working on the hurdles in October," Power said from his rural McCook home. "It's all I ever really wanted to do."

Power's commitment to the sport and his natural athletic ability pushed him to the top as a hurdler at Gothenburg High School and beyond.

His success landed him a spot 50 years later in the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame.

Power, a 1960 GHS graduate, officially entered the Hall of Fame Saturday in Lincoln surrounded by family and friends.

Power began competing in track and field events at school somewhere around sixth grade.

He said his long legs made him a natural for hurdles and coach Dutch Zorn realized his talent in the event right away.

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“Zorn was a great coach but he didn’t really understand a lot about the hurdles,” Power said. “He pretty much just left me alone and let me do my thing.”

Power’s “thing” was winning races.



As a junior in high school, Power placed fifth at the state track meet in the 60-yard high hurdles.

His senior year Power finished the 120-yard hurdle race in a dead heat with a runner from Pierce in 15.5 seconds. He got the silver medal.

But high school wasn’t all about track meets and medals for Power. He said what he remembers most about those years is the camaraderie with his teammates and his relationship with Zorn.

“Zorn had a knack for understanding kids,” Power said, “and he knew how to get them to perform.”

After high school Power carried his talents further, competing at Hastings College for two years before transferring to Oklahoma State University where he intended to pursue a degree in veterinary medicine.

Because his transfer made him ineligible for college track competitions for a year, Power sought another avenue for racing.

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He ran in what the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) called postal meets, winning a postal championship in the 60-yard hurdles in a time of 7.5 seconds.

Then the Olympics called his name.

“That’s what I always wanted to do,” Power said. “Run in the Olympics.”

He joined a Southern California track club where he said he watched and learned and hurdled against some of the best athletes across the country.

After a year with the California Striders, Power returned to Nebraska and enrolled at the University of Omaha with two years of college eligibility left.

While there, he set records in both the

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