

Police Athletes of the Past

Patrick McDonald

IN 1908, Patrick McDonald wanted to represent the United States in the Olympic Games but was frustrated when his speciality, the fifty-six pound weight-toss, was excluded from the program. However, he wasn't easily defeated, and commenced training to compete in the sixteen pound shot-put event, and success was his in the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm, Sweden. In these games, he became the first man in history to pass the fifty-foot mark for the shot-put.

It was this keen desire to compete that places Pat McDonald among the greatest sportsmen who have ever lived.

He was born in 1881 in County Clare, Ireland, where he inherited his weight-throwing ability from his father and grandfather. After finishing school in 1899, he departed his home for the United States. His first employ was as a warehouseman at which he worked sixty-six hours a week for twelve dollars. These working conditions, which today Pat, himself, calls slave labor, ironically kept him in shape for his future athletic endeavors. However, looking ahead to the future, he joined the police force in 1905 before his first major American competition, and served the department for forty years until his retirement as a captain in 1946.

It wasn't until 1907 that the genial Pat commenced training his massive frame which stands at six feet, four inches, and weighs two hundred and eighty pounds for weight throwing with the Irish American Athletic Club. His first competition was in 1907 and he won the National Junior Amateur Fifty-Six Pound Weight Throwing Championship with a toss of 37 feet. This record is still standing. His career ended in 1933 when at the age of 53 he won the National AAU Senior 56 pound weight throw.

In the intervening years he captured the fancy of the public and became a world renowned figure. While on traffic duty at 43rd Street and Broad-

way, sight-seeing bus "holler boys" pointed him out as the cop who owns three Olympic titles, 24 national championships and uncounted Metropolitan championships.

When Pat entered the department he was nicknamed the "Babe," and has been so known through the years. As to why he stuck with sports he tells you today that he didn't know any better, but is very happy as he enjoyed every minute devoted to them. When he entered the department his salary was \$66.59 a month and a day off was a rare treat. The tours were longer and there was reserve duty, but a competitive thirst kept him in athletics despite the hardships.



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WITH weight throwing ruled out of the 1908 Olympics in London, Pat took up shot-putting.

The sixteen pound shot felt like a tiny pellet to him after training with the fifty-six pound weight. It did offer one great challenge, though. At that time, competition was held for both best hand and off-hand which meant that Pat had to become ambidexterous in order to create a great impression to coincide with his great size. As a result he entered both events in the Olympic Games at Stockholm, Sweden in 1912. When it came time for crowning the Champions, he received the best hand crown for putting the shot past the fifty foot mark for the first time in history. With his off-hand, left hand, he finished second with a toss of forty-two feet.

The war eliminated the Olympic Games of 1916, and Pat was forced to wait until 1920 for his next opportunity in world competition. This time at forty years of age, and when most athletes seek more quiet lives, Pat entered both the shot-put and the weight throw. However, he was more anxious to compete in the latter event and perfected his form in it at the expense of the shot-put. The results—an Olympic record of 36 feet with

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the fifty-six pound weight which has not yet been surpassed, and fourth place in the shot-put.

In recalling the fifty-six pound event, he has some regrets. The weather was desperate—cold, wet, and windy—certainly not conducive to good track competition. This resulted in what was a disappointment to him because he wanted to place the record at the forty-foot mark and conditions didn't allow for such a feat. He was capable of such a mark, and the following year his best mark ever with the weight was chalked up with a throw of forty-two feet. He reached his goal which although unofficial is still unsurpassed.

PAT McDONALD is all the more remarkable when it is considered that he found time to take department exams to reach the rank of captain; and, with his wife Mary, raised a son, Joseph, to be an outstanding physician. If this is not of enough significance, Pat quietly reminds you that his training was done on his own off time and to compete in each of the Olympics he took a leave of absence without pay.

The one championship which he today relishes the most is his last one. He was fifty-three years old when he went to Chicago to compete in the Centennial Exposition with a little mind to win. At the games, he threw the 56 pound weight 35 feet, about one foot short of his 1920 Olympic Record. As a token of esteem for this great feat, and for his Olympic Titles, the New York Athletic Club awarded Pat McDonald one of its very few life memberships.

Today his first junior record set in 1907 with the shot-put is still tops as is his fifty-six pound throw for height at 16' $\frac{3}{4}$ " and the Olympic 56 pound weight throw at 36' $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

He is still a rabid track fan attending two to three of the major meets each year. Comparing today with yesteryear, he states that it wasn't thought possible to break fifty feet with the shot-put, and this has built in him a keen desire to watch Jim Fuchs, the present champion. However, he does feel after watching other shot-putters, in the game today that the officials have relaxed the stringent form for shot-putting which dictates that the shot will be held at the ear but rather have allowed the modern day athletes to bring the arm in back of the ear which permits greater leverage, and hence greater tosses for more distance.

When asked about his retirement, he says "That's what I did. I am doing nothing but having a rest, and a lot of fun with my wife and family."



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Name: *Spring 3100: A Magazine for Policemen.*

Publisher: New York City Police Department.

Date: November, 1950.

Location: New York, N.Y.

Donor: www.archive.org

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