

Track and Field



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A Long-lasting Record

The sport of pole vaulting was revolutionized in 1961 with the advent of the flexible pole, usually made of fiberglass, which helped vaulters soar higher than ever. But one of the most spectacular achievements in vaulting history came long before then. In 1942, using the standard bamboo pole of his era, Cornelius Warmerdam of the USA shattered the existing record of 15' 1" by 8" with an unbelievable 15' 9" vault. That mark stood for 15 years until America's Bob Gutowski, using a metal pole, topped it by a mere $\frac{3}{8}$ ".

After his 1942 triumph, the 26-year-old Warmerdam seemed destined to become the first vaulter to break the 15' 10" mark. He did manage to up the record to 15' 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ " at an indoor meet in 1943, but World War II cut short any hopes he might have had for an Olympic title in 1944, and the high-flying Warmerdam retired from competition in 1945 to become a coach at Fresno State College.

On May 20, 1961, American George Davies used a fiberglass pole to set a mark of 15' 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", just 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " higher

than Warmerdam's record. But from then on, the record was improved upon at an extraordinary rate, and it took less than 11 years for a vaulter to hit 18' 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Don "Tarzan" Bragg of the USA was the last world-record setter before the fiberglass pole was introduced. He cleared 15' 10" on July 2, 1960.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE WORLD RECORD

17' 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	Wolfgang Nordwig (EGE), Jun. 17, 1970, in East Berlin
17' 11"	Nordwig, Oct. 25, 1970, in Turin, ITA
18' $\frac{1}{2}$ "	Christos Papanicolaou (GRE), Oct. 25, 1970, in Athens
18' 1"	Kjell Isaksson (SWE), Apr. 8, 1972, in Austin, Tex.
18' 2"	Isaksson, Apr. 15, 1972, in Los Angeles, Calif.
18' 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	Bob Seagren (USA), May 23, 1972, in El Paso, Tex.
18' 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	Isaksson, May 23, 1972, in El Paso, Tex.
18' 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ "	Seagren, Jul. 2, 1972, in Eugene, Ore.
18' 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	Dave Roberts (USA), Mar. 28, 1975, in Gainseville, Fla.
18' 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	Earl Bell (USA), May 29, 1976, Wichita, Kans.
18' 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	Roberts, Jun. 26, 1976, in Eugene, Ore.