

Track and Field



IC4As



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Starting with a Row

Such is the sometimes strange evolution of events that America's oldest track and field carnival actually had its beginning as a rowing regatta. It was back in 1873 that a two-mile run was held in conjunction with the Saratoga (N.Y.) Rowing Regatta, a race which was won by Duncan Bowie of McGill University.

Interest from this single event was enough that the following year five trophies were offered by newspaperman James Gordon Bennett, and he termed the competition the "New York Herald Olympian Games." By 1875, while the rowing regatta remained the premier attraction, drawing some 30,000 spectators, including President Ulysses Grant, the number of track events doubled to 10, and an entire day was devoted to them.

Finally, on Dec. 5, 1875, the Inter-Collegiate Athletic Association was created, and on July 20, 1876, the first official intercollegiate track competition was staged at Saratoga, with 13 schools participating. Among the events were a three-legged race, two walking races and a baseball throw.

From 1877 to 1903, the outdoor competition was held at various fields in New

York City, with Harvard dominating much of the early meets, capturing the team championship from 1880-1886. The meet, which came to be known as the IC4As (Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America), began attracting powerful schools from across the country, and during the two decades 1921 to 39, the University of California, Southern California and Stanford combined to win 16 team titles.

An indoor IC4As was initiated in 1922 at a New York armory, eventually shifting to Madison Square Garden, where it remained for about 30 years. In 1976 the University of Pennsylvania hosted the 100th anniversary meet, and the Philadelphia school now is the permanent home of the outdoor competition. The indoor IC4As has been hosted by Princeton since the early 1970s.

In all its long history, the outstanding personality of the IC4As would have to be Jumbo Jim Elliott, the venerable coach of Villanova. In 1979 the Wildcats gave Elliott his 29th IC4A championship when Sydney Maree and Amos Korir each set two meet records during the outdoors and Don Paige won the 800 and 1,500 meter runs.