

EARLY OLYMPIAN

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

They're not too much of a boasting crew, up in the northern tier mountains of Pennsylvania, but when it comes to athletics, they've got good reason to be. One of the reasons is the late Walter B. Tewksbury, of Tunkhannock. Doc Tewksbury, who died in 1968, was the star of that Olympiad, and quite by accident. As a pre-dental student at the University of Pennsylvania during the 1890's, he had no intention of participating in track. It was in that period that the first Penn Relays were run, you know, and suddenly the University became a center of track activity! On the second floor of the dorm where Walter roomed, a hot-shot track star from Boston arrived with a drawer full of medals. The young guys on the first floor, (tired of the Bostonian's bragging) decided to challenge, and put up Doc Tewksbury as their runner. The race was on the city streets of Philadelphia, (not on a cinder track) and wearing sneakers, Doc was the winner. The second floor guys picked up the tab for an oyster dinner, and the "Boston track man" left for New England and never returned to Penn. Meanwhile, Mike Murphy, the Penn coach, heard of the race and Tunkhannock Tewksbury's win, and drafted "Doc" for the Penn team. During the next four years Penn won for intercollegiate track titles and Walter Tewksbury was selected for the U.S. Olympic team. During the early summer of 1900, Dock Tewksbury, (with no track facilities available in Tunkhannock) practiced his running around the cemetery, (and his hurdling over the tombstones)--the graveyard was right next to the Tewksbury home at 17 West Tioga Street.

In any event, he went to London with the other American athletes.. he won the gold in the 200 meters and the 400 meter hurdles..took the silver in the 100 and the 60 meters. Years later, Doc told Lyman Krewson up in Tunkhannock that he "could have come home with four medals if he hadn't gotten seasick going over on the boat". Dr. Walter Tewksbury returned to Wyoming County--(to Tunkhannock)--his pretty home town in the Endless Mountains and practised dentistry and raised a family. He never lost the appearance of being a finely-tuned athlete. In 1960--(the 60th anniversary of his Olympic triumph) he returned to London as a guest of the Olympic organization. He was 85, and he had a ball. Doc died on April 26, 1968. His son, Dr. Rowland Tewksbury carries on the tradition of his father--(he practises dentistry along Tioga Street in Tunkhannock) the son of the Pennsylvanian who won two golds and two silvers in 1900--the Olympic Games at London. Doc Tewksbury--whose name gives us a trio of great athletes from the Endless Mountains of Pennsylvania--Red Grange of Forksville, Christy Mathewson of Factoryville and Doc Tewksbury of Tunkhannock.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.