

Kelly Myrick



Kelly Myrick didn't even know what the hurdles were when he arrived at Brien McMahon High School half a century ago.

He soon learned, however.

"I never heard of the hurdles," he said. "I was fast and my first year I ran the half-mile and broke the school record.

"Then at practice one day I was watching some of the guys jump over the hurdles and my coaches, Walt Czekaj and Jack Casagrande, said 'Why don't you try it.'"

So Myrick did and that decision helped shape the rest of his life.

It wasn't long before Myrick established himself as the best hurdler in the county and state. And by the time he graduated in 1966, he was best hurdler in New England and one of the best in the country.

Myrick not only won FCIAC and state championships in the high and low hurdles, but set new records in both. His state record of 13.8 seconds in the 120 yard high hurdles

stood for nearly 30 years while his time of 18.9 in the 180 low hurdles was never broken.

But it was at the 1966 New England Championships in Keene, N.H., where Myrick's talent really showed as he beat all the champions from the other five states while setting another new record with his winning time of 13.9 in the high hurdles.

Then at the Nationals in Sacramento, Calif., Myrick capped off his amazing high school career by finishing fifth.

Myrick also excelled in the high jump and triple jump and routinely won four events in nearly every regular-season meet. He helped McMahon go 8-1 that season (losing only to state champion Rippowam) while the Senators finished third at the FCIAC championships.

He also won McMahon's annual decathlon as a junior and senior, winning eight of the 10 events and setting a total points record both years.

After the high school season, Myrick won the Connecticut AAU championship in the high hurdles and finished first at the National Junior Olympics at Randall's Island in New York. His final competition was the Russia-America track meet, also in New York, where he finished eighth.

Heavily recruited by colleges, including a four-year scholarship offer to Ohio State, Myrick opted instead to take his talents to the University of Texas at El Paso, a track and field powerhouse. One of his teammates was Bob Beamon, who set a new world record in the long jump at the '68 Olympics in Mexico City.

Myrick made an immediate impact at UTEP as he and three other freshmen ran the second-fastest 400-yard relay in the country. He also won the high hurdles at the New Mexico Invitational, while in 1967 and '68 he finished second at the Texas Relays.

While track and field was his best sport, Myrick also played basketball and football at McMahon. The jumping ability he displayed in track helped him set a new school record of 28 rebounds in a 106-61 win over Roger Ludlowe, shattering the previous record of 18. He was a halfback and defensive back in football, and also played drums in the school band and orchestra for three years.

Myrick, who now resides in El Paso, earned his BA degree in Political Science, studied law at the University of Colorado, and received his Master's in City Planning. He also served in the Peace Corps and later became active in local government. He was a Town and County Planner, a director of an economic development program, and a housing officer for the U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID) in West Africa. He has run for mayor and county commissioner, and is currently the election judge for the county.

He and his wife, Gwendolyn Facison-Myrick, MD, PhD, have three daughters and 11 grandchildren.