

Florida High School Athletic Association
1801 NW 80th Boulevard
Gainesville, FL 32606

Attn: Craig Damon Executive Director

USPS Certified Mail / Return Receipt AND Priority Mail

February 7, 2024

Craig,

This message is being sent for the purpose of securing that it has been received by responsible parties who, hopefully, will choose to do the right thing. My efforts are dedicated to the memory of 16 year old, Jesus Quesada, preventable 2002 Florida High School fatality, and countless other pole vault victims.

Several weeks ago, a local high school teenage pole vaulter provided me a video of himself (recorded this past track season) plummeting to the ground, after missing the landing mats, from a height exceeding 12 feet. The teenager was using a vaulting pole rented from Florida Pole Vault Rental. Along with this news, the young man informed me that one of his other team member's suffered a season ending injury while that young man was also misusing a vaulting pole provided by Florida Pole Vault Rental. These incidents took place in just one local school and are indicative of the incredibly high percentage of injuries occurring in other institutions across America. I cringe at the thought of how many young girls and boys are going to be subjected to the multitude of preventable hazards guaranteed to occur during the coming track season due to the misuse of flexible vaulting poles.

On the website of the National Federation of State High School Associations is found the following statement: **"Unfortunately, eliminating injuries in the pole vault is not going to happen, especially with young vaulters."** Is this an NFHS acknowledgment that pole vault information the organization promotes is flawed? Particularly alarming is the NFHS specific reference to "young vaulters." How does the NFHS define what they mean by "young vaulters"? Why would anyone state, "especially with young vaulters"? Is this statement an admission that "young vaulters" are being purposely MISeducated by NFHS? Is it possible that the "young" are being intentionally GROOMED to believe it's "cool" to carelessly defy dangerous situations?

Since I reside in The Villages, Florida, the preceding facts inspired my attempt to contact members of The Villages High School Administration for the purpose of bringing to light ongoing preventable pole vault safety hazards of which I am aware. Contained within this communique are copies of two email messages I sent to The Villages High School. As you proceed reading, you will grasp the significance of articles I reference and the seemingly innocuous topics to which they relate. I guarantee, you will discover, these topics are NOT the least bit innocuous.

Question: Why is pole vault identified as the deadliest of all school sports events?

Copies of two 1949 newspaper articles, contained in the January 3, 2024, email I sent to Mr. Richard Pettus (The Villages High School Athletic Director), confirm for us that Coach Virgil Jackson is the true original creator of fiberglass vaulting poles. The 1949 articles also confirm that Virgil Jackson conceived the brand name of the first verified fiberglass vaulting poles as the "Sky-pole." Please, continue.

The following remarks are notable excerpts recorded in a blog titled, "FROM THE KITCHEN COUNTER..." - authored by Debra Chappell. Mrs. Chappell is a "UCS Spirit" vaulting pole manufacturing principal figure:

Referring to her dear friend, Bubba Sparks, and Bubba Sparks' close associate, Doug Boma (Publisher of Vaulter Magazine), Debra Chappell writes the following: "I was recently asked by Vaulter Magazine and friend Bubba Sparks for an interview about my father, his life, and personal observations around the pole vault pit for this month's issue."

Referencing specifically a gentleman by the name of Herb Jenks, Debra Chappell writes: "I just want to clear up one misconception about my father (a flattering one but a misconception all the same). He wasn't a scientist or an engineer and didn't 'invent' modern pole technology. That credit goes (**and goes alone**) to his business partner Herb Jenks. **It was Herb who invented and developed the very first fiberglass vaulting pole.**"



DOCUMENTED FACT: Sometime between 1952 and 1960, Virgil Jackson's ACCLAIM was hijacked by one of the five "plastic engineers" involved in manufacturing Coach Virgil Jackson's original vaulting poles. By name, the hijacker is Herb Jenks, pictured in Debra Chappell's article (image above). Mr. Jenks departed from our world in the late 1970s. As I understand it, Herb Jenks is the "spirit" behind the UCS Spirit vaulting pole brand, which commenced being marketed in 1987 as an offshoot of the "Pacer" brand. The original Pacer company was the brainchild of George Moore, father of Debra Chappell. George Moore passed away, circa 1981, several years prior to the launch of UCS Spirit vaulting poles.

In 1983, teenager, Darin Ohnstad, sustained fatal injuries implementing a "Pacer" vaulting pole. Darin's father began pursuing his legal case against "Pacer" in 1983, continuing to the Supreme Court of Nebraska and concluding in 1989. While still tied up in the Ohnstad legal case, which began in 1983, "Pacer" principals sold the "Pacer" brand to Gill Athletics in 1987. During the same time period, in 1987, the original "Pacer" principals also commenced marketing and selling their new UCS Spirit vaulting pole brand.

In 1991, upon the advice of Fresno State University track coach, Bob Fraley ("FATHER of the UCS Spirit National Pole Vault Summit"), I purchased a UCS Spirit brand vaulting pole for my teenage son, a high school senior. My son's first-time experience implementing his new UCS Spirit pole was at the 1991 "All Comers Meet" held at Coach Bob Fraley's FSU track and field facility. My son landed in the plant box on his very first attempt during that competition applying the brand new UCS Spirit vaulting pole.

It was also at this 1991, Fresno State University, "All Comers Meet," where I met a vaulter, participating in the competition with my son, who introduced himself to me as "Eddie Seese." Mr. Seese appeared to be in the age-range of 45, give or take a couple of years. At the time, Mr. Seese seemed to be one of the most knowledgeable participants at the event. After that, I stayed in touch with Mr. Seese and he successfully assisted me on several occasions of which his vast network of affiliations with track & field insiders served to my benefit.

Although, every "insider" involved with my UCS Spirit pole purchase had full knowledge of the true circumstances surrounding Darin Ohnstad's negligent 1983 death (mentioned earlier), I was never informed of Darin Ohnstad's case by any associated parties. My own experience eventually led to the gathering of evidence exposing UCS Spirit principals and their allies who, as a team, employ a concerted effort to conceal unpleasant facts and deceptive business practices veiled by false pretenses.

In 2014, The American Journal of Sports Medicine published a document entitled, "Catastrophic Injuries in Pole Vaulters." The archived "CATASTROPHIC AND SERIOUS POLE VAULTING ACCIDENT DATA" is included with this introduction as a three-page attachment. Published November 11, 2014, the document chronicles 84 confirmed victims, between 1971 and 2014, who suffered catastrophic consequences while attempting to pole vault. Twenty-four (24) of the victims are fatalities. The average age of the fatalities is only 17 years. Had this level of exposure to pole vault hazards been available to me in 1991, my wife and I would NEVER have allowed our son to participate in this proven deadly event. We would have also NEVER

purchased any product (including educational material) solicited by the UCS Spirit company, yet, today, the National Federation of State High School Associations pole vault education materials exclusively promote UCS Spirit MISinformation.

November, 2013, Ed Dare, father of Kevin Dare, the teenage pole vaulter who, in 2002, sustained fatal injuries during a nationally televised track meet, wrote the following messages to aforementioned pole vault "expert," Eddie Seese: "we are through totally with the very sport that took our sons [sic] life." Additionally, Ed Dare also stated, "please leave me out of pole vault safety and let me and my family live the rest of our lives forgetting about the most dangerous sport in the world and working with ego maniacs who could care less about protecting precious lives." Keep in mind, Kevin Dare vaulted applying "UCS SPIRIT" poles.

While the deadly "cover-ups" continue, I proved, long ago, that the explicit cause, underlying the avoidable pain and anguish inflicted upon victims who suffer the consequences of these lethal products, thrives within each vaulting pole manufacturer's deadly flawed instructions. I can prove, beyond any reasonable doubt, that UCS Spirit and other manufacturers KNOWINGLY avoid seeking solutions to catastrophic issues from which these entities continue to gain financial profit.

VAULTER MAGAZINE CONNECTION: Monday, July 19, 2021, was my first contact with Vaulter Magazine owner & publisher, Doug Boma. I informed Mr. Boma that my mission is to "educate students and parents for the purpose of saving lives while producing BETTER and SAFER pole vault results." I sent Mr. Boma a factual pole vault story and requested information regarding the cost of advertising in his magazine.

August 7, 2021, Mr. Boma published a video based on the historical pole vault information he received from me. Shortly after publishing his video, naive Mr. Boma informed me that he had immediately been contacted by Bubba Sparks. Upon Mr. Boma's discovery that my information is detrimental to the UCS cabal, Mr. Boma turned cold. With full knowledge that my mission is "to educate students and parents for the purpose of saving lives..." and, after providing a detailed price quote, Mr. Boma decided to reject any attempt by me to advertise in his Vaulter Magazine publication. It is clear that, after investing decades REWRITING pole vault history to benefit themselves, Mr. Bubba Sparks and his UCS cohorts remain terrified by my TRUE FACTS. I have all of the documentation.

November 25, 2014, seven years prior to my experience described in the previous paragraph, I sent a seven-page letter to UCS equipment Goliath CEO, Jeff Schwartz (copy attached), reiterating my primary objective which I stated in a preceding telephone conversation with Mr. Schwartz: "For my wife and myself, our top priority has always been the health and safety of ANYONE vaulting improperly on perilous flexible competition poles." I also directed questions to Mr. Schwartz regarding issues that he obviously did not want raised. Predictably, after that, Jeff Schwartz ceased all communication with me.

UCS Spirit manufacturers continue to thrive by knowingly deceiving consumers of their products while also proliferating deadly MISinformation. The documents in this packet expose only the tip of this corrupt and deadly iceberg.

It is my opinion, the negligence infecting "pole vault" is a very sobering issue that needs to be seriously addressed by responsible adults possessing the courage to confront these preventable LETHAL PROBLEMS which can be quickly eradicated.

Sincerely,

Michael Toledo
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