

History of the PCL Track & Field Meets

This book has three main purposes. The first is to record the history of the PCL Track and Field Meets from its infancy to the current year. The second is to recognize the outstanding achievements by the many athletes. The third is to rectify some of the mistakes made over the years as to PCL Meet records and record holders. Most of the information has come from articles in the Putnam County Sentinel, the Leipsic Free Press, the Continental News Review and the Columbus Grove Vidette. Some information was found in year books from the high schools of Putnam County. Computer printouts of the PCL Meets over the past decade have also been used.

The results of the PCL Meets were usually reported each year in the Putnam County newspapers. However, during the early 1930's and World War I and II, the newspapers reported very little. The year for the very first meet is even in doubt. The World Wars had a great effect on these meets as to whether they would be held or not. Another reason for results not being reported is that newspapers in the early part of the century depended entirely on someone turning this information into the newspaper. And there were no sport's reporters during this era.

On April 29, 1915, the Leipsic Free Press had a comprehensive and detailed article on the upcoming PCL Track and Field Meet. It listed the events, eligible schools, date and site. It listed the people in charge: F. W. Sexton, President, Columbus Grove; G. D. Swartzel, Vice President, Ottawa; Perry T. Ford, Secretary and Treasure, Vaughnsville. This article also mentioned that this would be the second year the meet was held, suggesting that the first one was in 1914. However, there is no mention of any PCL Track and Field Meet in 1914 or any results for 1915 in any of the county newspapers. Bad weather and World War I may have been the reason for the cancellations.

The first PCL Track and Field Meet that can be verified was held in 1920. This was documented by an article with this sentence, "We hardly know how to begin to tell the story of the first Putnam County Field Meet". Winners and results were given for all events.

The Meet was well covered in the newspapers through 1929. However, for some unknown reason, there are no reports on the PCL Meet from 1930-1934. In 1935, the Sentinel reported that a "track meet for the high schools of Putnam County would be held at the county fair grounds in Ottawa, thus reviving a sport that

attracted more than ordinary interest just a few years ago". This seemingly verifies that the event was not held during this time period.

From 1936 through 1942, the Meet was well covered again by the local papers. In 1943 the PCL Meet was not held due to World War II. In 1944, the Meet was held, but only the winner was reported.

Beginning in 1945 and to the present, the PCL Track and Field Meet has been well covered with team scores, individual winners and results given in great detail.

From 1920-1927, the boys' and girls' results were put together to determine only one school winner. The boys would have 12-14 traditional track and field events, but the girls usually only had four events. The most common ones were as follows: a 50-yard dash, a baseball throw, a potato sack race and a relay race.

In 1928, the boys and girls had separate Meets. The girls continued to have their own school winner until 1942. The girl's PCL Track and Field Meet was not restarted until 1971 and it has continued to the present date. The boys have had a continuous run of meets from 1935 to the current date except for 1943.

The events for boys have evolved over the years. In the field events, three have been held each year since 1920 – the shot put, high jump and the long jump. The pole vault event was held in 1920, but was not held from 1929-1944. In the track events, four have been held each year since 1920: 220-yard/200-meter dash, 440-yard/400-meter dash, 880 yard/800 meter run and the mile/1600 meter relay.

Hopefully, this book will be a source for documenting PCL records in the future. As you look through the articles, you will notice many, many corrections concerning who actually set a PCL record in the various events. The major discrepancies concerned the following: Carol Lammers of Miller City, Everett Seitz of Ottawa, Larry Johnson of Leipsic, Selwynn Judson of Leipsic, Jesse Lehman of Pandora, Roger Diller of Pandora and Gene Shawber of Leipsic.

Though there were many discrepancies as to who held what record and what year it was set, there is no doubt as to what schools have dominated the Putnam County League Tournament. Through 2022, the Columbus Grove boys have won 52, the Columbus Grove girls 25 and the Leipsic girls 17 PCL Championships.

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This book will allow you to compare athletes from different eras and to see from year to year who dominated certain events. For example, it will be easy to see who had the best time in the 100-meter dash or the best distance in the shot in any particular year, but realize that there are many variables which affect these records such as rain, wind, all-weather tracks, better coaching techniques, improved equipment, etc.

Who were the most outstanding track athletes to perform in Putnam County over the years? What criteria would be used to answer this question? Some athletes dominated an event or two in the PCL Meet for several years. Some did very well in several events, individual and relays. Others were outstanding in the PCL Meet and at State. Which is more difficult - winning six individual events or three individual events and three relay races? Which is better - winning an event for four consecutive years or winning an event once and setting a PCL record which lasts for nearly 50 years? You have the information to find the answers to these questions and many more.

Sam Spallinger of Pandora-Gilboa and Kip Mansfield of Continental would certainly be considered as two of the greatest male athletes in Putnam County history based on total events won.

Sam Spallinger (2007-2010) won 16 times in six different events (14 individual and two relays) – four 100-meter dashes, four 200-meter dashes, three 400-meter dashes, three long jumps, one 400-meter relay and one 800-meter relay. Sam currently holds three PCL records – the 200-meter dash, the 400-meter dash and the long jump.

Kip Mansfield (1976-1979) won 14 times in five different individual events – four 200-meter dashes, four 400-meter dashes, four long jumps, one 100-yard dash and one 110 high hurdle race. Even though Kip never set any PCL records, he dominated his main events for his four years of participation.

From the girl's side, Shayla Siefker of Ottoville, Kelly Irwin of Columbus Grove, Kinsey Miller of Pandora-Gilboa and Amy Vennekotter of Miller City would be in the upper tier of greatest female athletes in Putnam County history based on total events won.

Shayla Siefker (2008-2011) won 15 times in four events (seven individual and eight relays) – three 400-

meter dashes, four 1600-meter runs, four 1600-meter relays and four 3200-meter relays. Shayla currently holds two PCL records – the 400-meter dash and the 1600-meter run.

Kelley Irwin (1991 - 1994) displayed her versatility by winning 14 times in eight different events (nine individual and five relays). She held PCL records in the 100-meter dash, the 800-meter run, 1600-meter run and the 3200-meter run. Kelly currently holds one PCL record and won a state championship as a member of the 800-meter relay team in 1992.

Kinsey Miller (1997-2000) had a similar career. She won 14 times in four different events (eight individual and six relays). Kinsey dominated three events, the 800-meter run, the 1600-meter run and the 3200-meter relay, by winning all four years. She held PCL records in the 800 and 1600 runs and her team currently holds the 3200-meter relay record.

Amy Vennekotter (1985-1988) won 12 individual events and one relay. Amy held three PCL records in the 400-meter dash, the long jump and was a member of the 1600-meter relay team.

There are many other male and female athletes that have had outstanding careers also. They may not have won as many PCL events as these athletes, but they may have dominated an event for their era or set a PCL record that lasted for many years or excelled at state and won a state championship. These athletes are also recognized as they are listed in various categories through out the book.

Enjoy the book as you go back in history and read about the great athletes who participated in the Putnam County Track and Field Meet. If any errors are detected, please contact me.

This book is dedicated to all the coaches and athletes that have participated in the PCL Track and Field Meets since 1920. I would like to give special recognition to five coaches in Putnam County that have had outstanding coaching careers in terms of longevity and success in Putnam County or at the PCL Meets, Tracy Brown of Columbus Grove, Bobbi Wirt of Continental, Bob Kaple of Ottoville, Emma Pleiman of Columbus Grove and Vicki Doty of Ottawa-Glandorf.