

## WAS - Gymnastics Legend

# Abie Grossfeld

*2001 Honoree*



## The only gymnastics coach to be inducted into the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame

Gymnastics legend Frank Cumiskey (1932, 1936 and 1948 gymnastics Olympian) stated, "After six decades of being in the trenches, Abie Grossfeld has influenced an untold number of gymnasts, coaches and judges who have notably impacted the positive development of gymnastics. Abie's level of excellence in the primary areas of gymnastics, as a whole, has been truly exceptional and, in my experience, has not been matched by any other individual."

Abie Grossfeld has been active in gymnastics for 60 years and counting. While many of his accomplishments and contributions have been outstanding, it is his whole body of work that has been truly extraordinary. Paraphrased statements by Olympians:

1984 Olympian and NBC commentator Tim Daggett said, "After each encounter with Abie, as I was developing through the years, I always left with a better understanding of the wonderful sport of gymnastics. The success of Abie and his gymnast Peter Kormann (at the 1976 Olympics) was my catalyst to dream bigger dreams, which ultimately took me all the way to the Olympics itself - on a team Abie coached. We won Gold as a team and Abie made us a team. In gymnastics, he's done it all. He imparted technique, wisdom and guidance in me."

1984 Olympic Team Captain Peter Vidmar said, "Abie held the collection of the 1984 team members together... Abie knows every significant gymnastics person - officials, judges, competitors - in the world... Abie brought a sense of neutrality to the team. He didn't play favorites. Subtly and very effectively, Abie created an atmosphere of camaraderie... not dissension. The team wound up having "good chemistry", and Abie was the chief chemist."

Don Tonry, 1960 Olympian said, "If there ever was a legend in gymnastics, or any sport, it is Abie."

Abie Grossfeld's official capacity as an athlete, a coach, judge or head of delegation involved **8** Olympic Games, **11** World Gymnastics Championships, and **5** Pan American Games.

#### **INTERNATIONAL COACHING POSITIONS** (spanned 28 years)

- Abie served as a coach in 5 Olympic Games.
- Three times Olympic Head Men's Coach: 1972, 1984 (won the team Gold medal – America's first) and 1988.  
*Note:* At the 1984 Games, the U.S. team defeated the reigning, the clear favorites and the same World Champion Chinese team who had defeated the Soviet Union's team (in Europe) at the 1983 World Championships eight months before. The U.S. Olympic victory was a major upset.
- Seven Olympic individual medals for men, including two Gold (Peter Vidmar on Pommel Horse and Bart Conner on Parallel Bars) in 1984.
- Twice Olympic Assistant Coach: for men in 1964 and for women in 1968.
- Five times World Gymnastics Championships Head Coach: 1966, 1981, 1983, 1985 and 1987.
- Twice Pan American Games Head Coach: 1983 (won the team Silver medal) and 1987 (won the team Gold medal).
- World Cup Head Coach: 1982 (Zagreb).
- The inaugural Goodwill Games Head Coach: 1986 (Moscow).
- Coupe de l'Excellence Head Coach: 1988 (Montreal, won team Gold medal).
- Member of the FIG (International Gymnastics Federation) Coaches' Commission: 2000.
- The U.S. National Coach for Men's Gymnastics: 1981 through 1988.
- Head Coach of the first U.S. team that defeated the USSR: 1982.
- Head Coach of the U.S. team that won the DTB Pokal (German Cup) which included the East Germans team: 1982.

#### **PERSONAL COACHED INDIVIDUALS**(International and National)

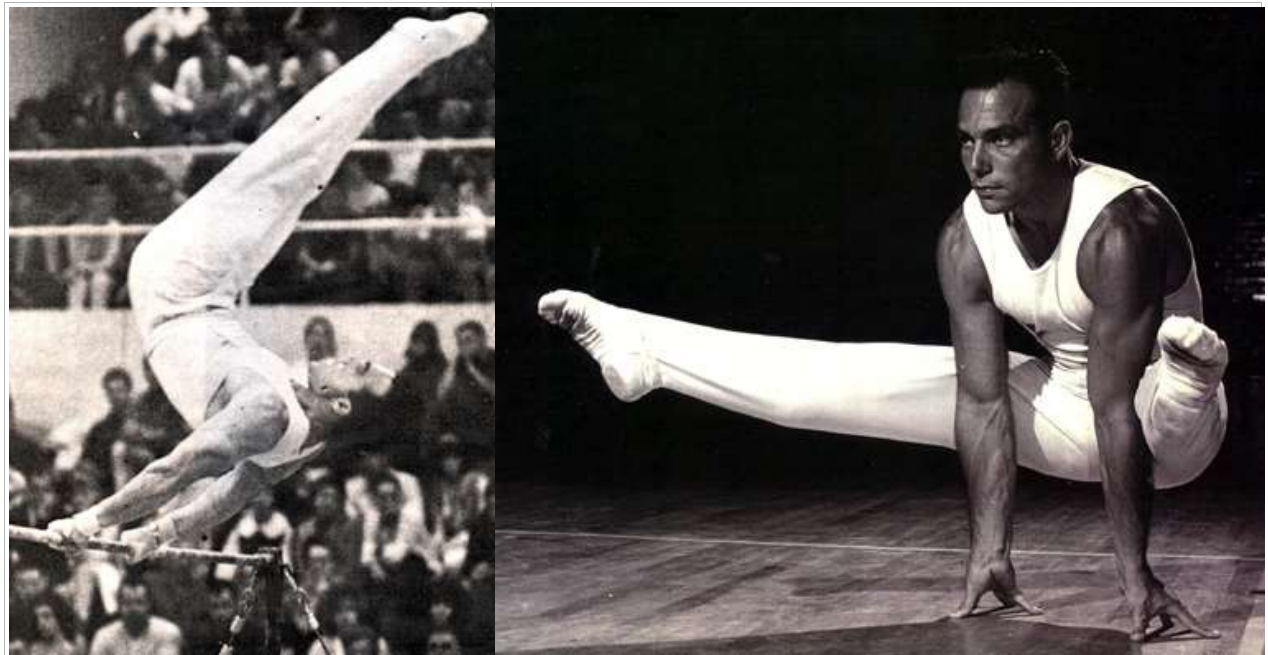
- Personal coach of Peter Kormann who in 1976 was the first post WWII U.S. Olympic gymnastics individual medalist since 1932 or in 44 years.
- Three Olympians, six World Championship, and six Pan American team members (winning four Gold medals).
- Personal coach of John Crosby who won an all sports record of winning a clean sweep of eight medals at a single Pan American Games, including two Gold medals (for floor exercise and rings in 1971).
- Peter Kormann won America's only gymnastics individual Gold medal (in floor exercise) at the 1975 Pan American Games.
- Two USSR International Cup Champions (televised worldwide).  
*Note:* John Crosby twice won Gold medals in the USSR: 1971 (tying World Champion, A. Nakayama in floor exercise) and in 1974 (as televised on ABC's Wide World of Sports). Yuri Aivazyan, a leading Moscow coach, stated that films of Crosby's routine were distributed throughout the Soviet Union to study Crosby's tumbling technique.
- Two World Cup Champions: John Crosby won floor exercise and vault in 1971.
- Coach of a two-time Head Olympic Coach Peter Kormann (1996 and 2000).
- Two all-around champions in the Champions All International Cup in London: 1976 and 1977.
- The first USGF Gymnast of the Year: 1976.
- Four Nissen Award winners (analogous to football's Heisman Trophy), which set a record of four recipients in 1980 and, as of 2008, has not been surpassed by any coach - achieved without the benefit of athletic scholarships.
- Forty-two years as a collegiate gymnastics head coach: one year at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and 41 years coach at Southern Connecticut State University, where he was also a professor of exercise science and athletics.

- Among the Olympic Games, World Championships, Pan American Games and National Team gymnasts who moved to New Haven to train under Abie Grossfeld for an extended period of time (and were not on his Southern Connecticut State University college team) were: Fred Roesthlisberger ('66 WC, '68 OG), Steve Hug ('68 & '72 OG, '74 WC), Dave Thor ('68 OG), Jim Culhane ('72 OG), Tom Beach ('76 OG), Arno Lascari ('66 WC), Fred Turoff ('70 WC), Richard Loyd ('68 OG, '71 PAG), Dave Butzman ('71 PAG), Dusty Ritter and Rick Tucker.

**INTERNATIONAL COMPETITOR**(spanned 15 years)

Abie Grossfeld represented the U.S. in international competitions spanning 15 consecutive years (1953-1967). Among the quadrennial games in which he competed as a gymnast were:

- Two Olympic Games (1956 and 1960)
- Two World Championships (1958 and 1962)
- Three Pan-American Games (1955, 1959 and 1963) where he won an all sports record total of 15 medals (a record that stood for 34 years) of these, 8 were Gold, with the special distinction of three Gold medals being for the same event (horizontal bar) in three intercontinental quadrennial games – a rare achievement in sports.
- Three World Maccabiah Games (1953, '57 and '65) where he won an all sports record of 17 gold medals.





### **NATIONAL COMPETITOR**

Abie Grossfeld competed in the Senior Elite (NGB) National Championships for 17 years: 1952-1968. He received both his BS and MS degrees from the University of Illinois, where he earned the Big Ten Medal of Honor, and was the first “minor” sports athlete to be selected as Illinois' Athlete of the Year. He won four NCAA titles (all-around, floor exercise and high bar twice), along with three second and three third place finishes. He also won seven Big Ten Championships (3 all-around, floor exercise, rings, parallel bars and high bar titles).

- Winner of three consecutive National (NGB) high bar titles (1955-1957) and placed in the top three 15 times.
- Other national all-around competitions won, which included a full complement of the top U.S. gymnasts, were the 1959 final Pan American trials, and the 1961 National trials for the U.S. team to Europe.

### **JUDGING**(spanning 55 years and counting)

Abie Grossfeld has been an FIG Brevet judge (highest certification) since the first course and examination were given in the United States (in 1969). He has officiated at the highest levels of competition, including:

- Two World Championships (1994 and 1999).
- Three Pre-Olympics (1991, 1995 and 1996).
- The Pan American Games (1983).
- Two Pacific Alliance (1996, 2002).
- German Unification Cup (1990).
- World Cup (Moscow, 2007).
- Two International Goodwill Games (1990 and 1998).
- The Swiss and German Cups (1989).
- The Chunichi Cup (1998).
- Numerous American Cups, National Championships and Olympic trials.

### **HONORS**

- Just the third coach and the first in gymnastics to be inducted into the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame, 2009 (inducted in the same class were the 1992 Olympic basketball gold medal Dream Team of Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, etc; also Michael Johnson, Picabo Street, Mary T. Meagher and other sports' greats).
- The first and only American to achieve the status of FIG Master Coach, 2000.
- FIG Insignia of Merit (awarded for world class performance as a gymnast in the Olympic Games), 1960.

- USA Gymnastics Hall of Fame (as an athlete, coach and contributor), 1979.
- National Gymnastics Judges, Frank Cumiskey, Hall of Fame.
- International Sports Jewish Hall of Fame, 1990.
- Both USA Gymnastics (1984) and NCAA (1973, 1975 and 1976) National Coach of the Year.
- USA Gymnastics prestigious Spirit of the Flame Award, 1999.
- USA Gymnastics Star Service Award, 2004.
- World Acrobatic Society Gallery of Legends Award, 2001.
- One of two Americans to be honored with the Pan American Union Award, 1999.
- The New York Benevolent Association Medal for saving a human life in peril, 1951.
- Named by "Sports Illustrated" (2000) as among the 50 Greatest Sports Figures of the 20th Century (from his birth state of New York, which included Vince Lombardi, Sandy Koufax, Lou Gehrig, Sugar Ray Robinson, Jim Brown, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Pop Warner, Sid Luckman, Hank Greenberg, among other sports' legends).
- Honored with a street name: Abie Grossfeld Circle in New Haven, Connecticut.

#### **NATIONAL COMMITTEES, BOARDS, TOURS, COURSES AND SPECIAL TASKS**

- FIG Coaches' Commission, 2000.
- U.S. Olympic Gymnastics Committee, 1968-1976 (disbanded after 1976).
- Board of Directors for New York City's bid for the 2012 Olympic Games, 2000-2005.
- Three stints on USA Gymnastics Board of Directors, 1976-1978, 1990-1995, 2001-2008.
- Head of USA Delegations at two World Gymnastics Championships, 1995 and 1997.
- Acting Head of Olympic Gymnastics Delegation for men, 1996.
- The World Acrobatic Society's Vice President, 2003-2006.
- USA Gymnastics National Hall of Fame Committee, 1988-2009.
- Presently, consultant to USA Gymnastics Hall of Fame Committee.
- USA Gymnastics Ethics Committee, 1990-2001.
- National Gymnastics Judges Association's National Director-At-Large, 1993-1996.
- IOC Solidarity Courses in Trinidad, 1995 and 1996.
- College Gymnastics Association Vice President, 2000-2004.
- USA Gymnastics Men's Program Committee, 1974-77, 1981-1988.
- U.S. National Coaching Staff, 1966-1972, 1981-1988, 2000.
- NBC production staff at the Barcelona Olympic Games, 1992.
- ABC production staff at the Fort Worth World Gymnastics Championships, 1979.
- The Valvoline Amateur Sports Advisory Board (which included John Wooden, Pat Summit, Dan Gable, Karch Kiraly, John Naber, Al Scates, Peter Vidmar, Kathy Johnson and other prominent sports figures), 1985-1988.
- U.S. representative to Japan to report on the Japanese system of gymnastics, 1970.
- Two U.S. Department of State tours of the U.S. National Gymnastics Teams to the Middle East: Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey in 1958; and Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Cyprus, Turkey, Pakistan and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1961.

#### **AUTHOR**

- Naber, John, Eureka, Innovations that Changed the Olympic Games (Contributed chapter through personal interviews, "Abie Grossfeld Imports the Dowel Grips"), 2004 (a gratis service).
- Grossfeld, Abie, (Ghost authored) Ted Williams Family Outdoor Physical Fitness Training Center Exercise Manual, 1973.
- Aronson, R. (Ed), The Science and Art of Judging Men's Gymnastics (wrote Chapter, "Judging Difficulty with Faulty Execution"), 1970 (a gratis service).
- Dintiman, G., et al, A Comprehensive Manual of Foundations and Physical Education Activities for Men and Women (wrote Chapter, "Gymnastics and Tumbling"), 1979.

- George, G, USGF Safety Manual (wrote Chapter, “Horizontal Bar”) 1985 and 1990 Eds (a gratis service).
- Wettstone, E., Gymnastics Safety Manual, (wrote Chapter, “Progressions in Teaching Skills – Parallel Bars”), 1977 and 1979 Eds. (a gratis service).
- Kapral, F., Coach’s Illustrated Guide to Championship Wrestling (wrote Chapter, “Pre-Season Conditioning Program”), 1964.

#### **VIDEO TAPES**

- NCAA Instructional Series – Two tapes by Abie Grossfeld (a gratis service).  
“The Horizontal Bar” (aired twice on ESPN, April 2 and 6, 1983).  
“The Pommel Horse” (Aired twice on ESPN, April 9 and 13, 1983).
- Gymnastics Safety First, Second and Always (USAG), 1987.
- Bud Greenspan’s Sixteen Days of Glory, 1984.

#### **AUDIO TAPE**

“Winning Advice,” from the Valvoline Oil Company, 1987, featuring Dan Gable, Ed Banach, Abie Grossfeld, Kathy Johnson, Peter Vidmar, John Naber, Al Scates and Bobby Weaver.

#### **TELEVISION APPEARANCES**

- ABC Wide World of Sports
- CBS Sports Spectacular expert commentator for the National Championships (1971)
- Exploring (nationally syndicated, 1963)
- Hollywood Palace (1964)
- The Art Linkletter Show (1964)
- I’ve got a Secret;
- Johnny Carson’s Tonight Show (1969 and 1970)
- NBC Today Show (1988)
- NBC International Champions
- NBC Special: U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony (2009)

#### **FEATURED IN THE FOLLOWING PUBLICATIONS** (among others)

- Encyclopedia Britannica (1965 to 1984 editions).
- The Body (Life-Time Science Library).
- Sports Illustrated.
- Gymnastics Balancing Acts (1997).
- America’s Greatest Coaches.
- Life.
- Coronet.
- Pageant.
- Olympische Turnkunst.
- International Gymnast.
- Rome 1960 – The Olympics that Changed the World (2008).
- “Crossword Puzzle” in the New York Sun (newspaper April 3, 2008).