

**HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETE
VAULTS TO SUCCESS
IN BUSINESS WORLD**

By Ericka Brown

When Bruce Caldwell was winning the pole vault in high school meets more than 44 years ago, he never imagined that his interest in the sport would one day take him to the Olympics (1976-1980-1996) — not as a competitor, but as companies that make and sells some of the world's finest sports equipment.

It all started in the his back yard as a child, at age 13, Bruce started swinging on the casted T clothes line pole to see who in the neighborhood could swing out the farthest distance. Wanting to get a letter in a sport he tried out at Raytown South Junior High for the 100 yard dash, the mile, the high jump, the shot and discus, and became 10th or last in each event. The leftovers who could not be in an event hung out at the pole vault pit and one day Bruce picked up a very large greenish clear sky-pole and said I am taking three tries at the lowest bar and if I clear it, I can be a pole vaulter, if I miss three times, it is time to find a vocation/job.

Little did Bruce know as he ran down the dirt runway managing the pole he stuck the pole in the wooden narrow box and road it up and lifted his hips over the bar on the first try, that he had in fact, chosen a vocation at such an early age. Seven feet one inch was the measure and he became a pole vaulter on the team with only 2 meets left in the season. At the first meet Bruce jumped 7'6" to take 2nd and no-heighted as the second meet started at eight feet. The school letter he received in Track and Field motivated him to study hard and train to go on to be the best jumper in the indoor season in Kansas City 1969. As a pole vaulter at Raytown South High School he jumped 13'6" and Bruce attributes his foundation of vaulting to his track coach, the famous USA coach Bob Craddock who was one of the few who understood and knew the art of pole vaulting. This accomplishment in High School enabled him to get a pole vault scholarship at Central Missouri State University Warrensburg Mo. where Bruce jumped a lifetime best of 15'8".

Bruce spent two years in college preparing to be a coach or a sports therapist, but when he was 23 he became involved in writing a book, *The Elusive Bar*, which led him to consider

how the design of vaulting poles could be improved. The Sky Pole Company offered him the opportunity to make his designs a reality, and in 1976 he gave one of the new poles to his friend, Earl Bell. Within a month Bell broke the World Record with Bruce's new concept at 18'7 ½" and made the 1976 Olympic team.

In 1976 Bruce founded FiberSport Track and Field Company. After many American athletes jumped their very best on Bruce's design, High school and Foreign athletes began jumping high too. Polish vaulter Wladyslaw Kozakiewicz starting breaking World records with the design concept and went on to capture the World outdoor record set twice in the 1980 Moscow Olympics and gain the Gold Medal at 18'11 ½". Earl Bell went on to jump 19' plus on his design in 80's in many World Championships..

Ten years later, Bruce sold the company to Sports Supply Group™ in Dallas and joined their staff promoting the PORTaPIT™ name they had acquired. Because of the credibility he'd established with contacts all over the world, Bruce had the opportunity to bid on and win the opportunity to supply equipment for 15 sports and managed 60 technicians to support the athletes at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta — an incredible experience.

Since then, in 1998 Bruce started a new company, ESSXsport, which produced equipment and uniforms for several sports, including soccer and track and field, the two largest participation sports in the U.S. Bruce took the company public on the OTCBB trading in 2001 under the symbol of ESXS. The company sponsored many sports camps and competitive events and provided advice and assistance to athletes and coaches. In 2004, the company bought its way out of the public arena and became private. With the concept of the ESSX consistency many great vaulters such as Olympian Kellie Suttle, Jillian Schwartz, and top vaulters like Tracy O'Hara, Tye Harvey, Jim Davis, and Bubba McLean went to the trials on ESSX poles. Master's vaulter Bubba Sparks has jumped on every concept and design vaulting pole Bruce has ever made such as Sky-pole, FiberSport and ESSX and he is currently the 59 year old Masters World Record holder.

Most recently Bruce's manufacturing equipment, designs and name ESSX has been acquisitioned by United Sports Technology and Composites a division of UST Mamiya. A Dallas TX based major golf shaft manufacturer with satellite manufacturing in Bangladesh and

offices in Japan. UST Mamiya has retained him to sell poles for the next two years to help in the transition.

Of the 13 new products he has introduced to the sporting goods industry over the years, this last week was the first time he chose to submit a patent on one of his ideas. His new (VPS SYSTEM) VAULT POLE SAVER SYSTEM™ is a box collar on steroids that will greatly improve the pole vault event and reduce injuries. This item and many other new products will be introduced for sale in the oncoming months.

If you're a teenager who would like to take your sport or hobby to the Olympic level, Bruce Caldwell advises you to search for challenges that test your ability. "I never thought what I did in high school would be important to my future," he says, "but the same qualities that were required for success then are important in the business world today"

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