

Legends of the CHSAA
Del Benjamin – La Salle Academy (Class of 1964)



Del Benjamin in 1963

In high school he set meet records, league records, and national records, many times breaking his own records as he soared to ever greater heights.

Del Benjamin, of La Salle Academy (Class of 1964), showed exciting potential in the high jump from an early age. As an 11-year-old he cleared 5'-1". As a high school freshman in 1961, Del won the Varsity High Jump event at both the CHSAA Indoor and Outdoor City Championships. And Benjamin was the 1961 Eastern States Champion setting the national freshman class record with a meet record 6'-3¾" leap.

Another national class record followed in 1962 when he jumped 6'-7¼" as a sophomore. That year, Benjamin repeated as the CHSAA Indoor and Outdoor City Champion in his specialty event. At the 1962 Penn Relays, Benjamin won the invitational High School Championship High Jump event with a meet record height of 6'-7", an inch higher than the college champion. For his performance Del was voted Outstanding Schoolboy Athlete of the Penn Relays. In June he took the Eastern States High Jump crown again with a 6'-5¼" effort, breaking his own meet record.

During Benjamin's junior year indoor season, he won the AAU National Interscholastic Indoor High Jump at 6'-5". When he won his third consecutive CHSAA Indoor City Championship title he set a National Indoor class record clearing an official height of 6'-7" (rounded down from 6'-7½").

The year was 1963. To that point in high school history, there had only been eleven jumps of 6'-6" or better indoors and Del Benjamin owned five of them. And all-time Indoors, only one jump in history was higher: John Thomas' 6'-7½" National record, set in 1958. Outdoors, Del would repeat as the Penn Relays High School High Jump Champion and won the CHSAA Outdoor City title for the third time. In June, Del won his third consecutive Eastern States title breaking his own meet record yet again, clearing 6'-6".

In 1964, his Senior year, Del won his 4th Indoor City Championship high jump title in four tries. Unfortunately, an injury in the spring prevented him from competing in the high jump during the outdoor season. He did participate in the Penn Relays though, splitting a 50.5 quarter-mile anchor leg on La Salle's class One Mile Relay team.



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After four years at LaSalle, Del had accumulated an impressive high jump resume. Nationally ranked, National Records, seven CHSAA City Championship titles, three Eastern States Outdoor titles, two Penn Relays titles, a Penn Relays Outstanding Athlete award, multiple meet records and the CHSAA League record holder Indoors and Outdoors. There is no doubt, Del has more accomplishments hidden by the passage of time.

After graduating from LaSalle, Benjamin attended Manhattan College. Although he still dabbled in the High Jump, and scored in championship meets, Del reinvented himself with a focus on the Long Jump. Del had quite a bit of success at this new event. He won three IC4A Long Jump championships (two outdoor/one indoor), won the 1968 Penn Relays Long Jump Championship with a school record 25'-7" leap, and was a five-time Metropolitan champion.

All records are made to be broken and Del's were no exception. His CHSAA Indoor High Jump record stood for seven years, broken by Brian Bozzone of Nazareth in 1970. The CHSAA Outdoor record lasted nine years, broken by LaSalle's Bruce Groneveldt in 1971.

In 1996 Del Benjamin was inducted into the La Salle Academy Athletic Hall of Fame. In 1998 Del was honored with an induction into the Manhattan College Hall of Fame. I don't know if Del Benjamin is in the CHSAA Hall of Fame, but if not, please consider this a nomination.

