

George Goulding: A Case Study in Sporting Excellence

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George Henry Goulding dominated the sport of race walking in North America between 1908 and 1916. A gold medallist in the 10-kilometre race walking event at the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games, Goulding was a paragon of sporting and moral excellence. Competing during an era of accelerated societal transformations and rapid shifts to professional and/or commercial-based sport, the native of Hull, England, remained steadfast in his devotion to an ascetic lifestyle and to amateurism in sport.

Triumphant in 95 percent of his athletic contests, Goulding's style and skill in race walking were lauded even by his strongest rivals as flawless. Competing against such internationally renowned race walkers as Webb, Lamer, Liebgold and Renz, Goulding was never defeated from scratch after 1908. He trained out of the Central YMCA in Toronto under sportsman John Howard Crocker and was so dominant in his sport that most of his races were handicap events. Less skilled competitors were given headstarts in order to neutralize Goulding's talent and to make the events crowd-pleasing. So great was his prowess that he was considered virtually the premier race walker of his time and the greatest athletic drawing card of the season in both Canada and the United States. Unheralded today because of the perceived nuances of his sport and his lack of personal chutzpah, Goulding competed in the shadow of interest attached to the controversial Toronto long distance champion, Tom Longboat. The rich legacy of his athletic accomplishments as well as Goulding's place in the history of race walking have received very little serious study in sport history.



The NASSH team before the Ohio Village game against the Muffins



The fabulous Muffins team, in 1855 baseball garb.