

## The Evolution of American Youth Hammer Throwing

1997 to 2007 \*

Harold Connolly & Bob Gourley

The growth in American youth hammer throwing measured by the number of states participating (7 in 1997) and the number of ranked throwers competing (ranked = boys throwing 150 feet + and girls throwing 120 feet +) showed a significant increase from 1997 to 2003 (states up to 14 for boys, 10 for girls, and participation up 43% boys and 38% girls). However, in the four seasons since 2003 the number of participating states remained relatively constant but three other factors showed significant improvement:

1. While the number of ranked boys increased only .02%. The number of ranked girls increased 30%.
2. In the past four seasons since 2003 the number of boys throwing farther than 200' + increased 56%, and the number of girls throwing farther than 150' + increased 47%.

The increases that have been made in the numbers of youth hammer throwers and participating states and the increasing performance levels since 2003 can be attributed to the following factors:

- USATF began regularly offering youth and Junior Olympics hammer-throwing competitions in 2003 and began including qualified American youth hammer throwers on their World Youth Track and Field Championships Teams;
- A growing number of hammer throw knowledgeable parent coaches and motivated youth club and high school coaches who teach youth how to throw the hammer;
- Parent and youth hammer throw coaches who are introducing 7th and 8th grade children to the fun and challenge of hammer throwing. See the following chart: Nationally Ranked Hammer Throwers Starting in Seventh and Eighth Grades.
- The inclusion of hammer throw coaching at influential and motivational summer throws camps - Ironwood, Carrie Lane's, Pete Kell's, John Powell's, Larry Judge's, Mike judge's, Jud Logan's, and Don Babbitt's summer throws camps;
- The readily available and more widely disseminated digitized and printed hammer throw coaching materials;
- Growing interest in the event particularly among girls;
- The increasing awareness and motivational impact of Bob Gourley's lists (national boys and girls high school hammer throw performance rankings) and Martin Bingisser's high school hammer throw web site ([www.hshammer.com](http://www.hshammer.com));

- Mike Holman's USATF Emerging Elite Coaches' Camp during the summer at the U.S. Olympic Training Center;
- The national outdoor scholastic track and field competitions that include the hammer throw;
- Enlightened state high school track and field federations that have changed their policies to permit high school athletes while competing on their school's track and field teams to also compete in USATF youth hammer throw competitions when the hammer throw is not offered by the athlete's school's track and field program. (Rhode Island is the only state that offers the hammer throw as a regular part of its interscholastic track and field program);
- And the gradually expanding and improving hammer throw training and competitions offered by the USATF youth clubs program.

\* The data for The Evolution of American Youth Hammer-Throwing 1997 – 2007 compiled by Bob Gourley can be found on [www.HShammer.com](http://www.HShammer.com).

### **Nationally Ranked Hammer Throwers Starting in Seventh and Eighth Grades**

<b>Boys</b>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Zach Richards	8th	156'10"	182'07"	207'09"	221'
03"					
Wes Wright	8th	165' 01"	189' 01"	216' 06"	219'
07"					
Conor McCullough	8th		159' 05"	213' 00"	243'
11"					
<b>Girls</b>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Allison Horner	8th	131' 11"	159' 09"	167' 05"	177'
09"					
Arianna Lugo	8th	140' 06"	155' 10"	162' 01"	161'
07"					
Patrice Gates	7th		147' 06"	160' 01"	164'
02"					
Casey Kraychir	7th		135' 01"	152' 01"	173'

04"

Michelle Poet 08"	7th	131' 03"	123' 05"	136'
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Katie Kraychir 10"	7th		141' 04"	152'
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Olivia Midles 11"	8th		129' 10"	145'
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**Interesting:**

Casey Kraychir in 8th grade -152' 01"    Katie Kraychir in 8th grade - 152' 10"

**Closing Observations:**

- The statistics indicate a significant advantage in higher hammer throwing results for seniors in high school who began learning the event in grades seven and eight (ages 12 - 13) under the guidance of knowledgeable hammer throw coaches.
- Youth throwers' annual throwing results progress may be an indicator of the effectiveness of the coaching strategies.
- Training opportunities (like that of the USATF Emerging Elite Coaches' Camp) should be initiated for USATF youth club throws coaches who provide 12 - 14 year olds ongoing hammer throwing and Javelin throwing coaching.
- USATF level 1 and level 2 Coaches' Training program might consider offering separate training courses in hammer throwing and javelin throwing for beginners, designed for coaches working with 12 - 14-year-old throwers.