H. Blaine Lindgren

June 26, 1939 ~ October 5, 2019

Celebrating a National Sport Legend, Utah's H. Blaine Lindgren:

Utah's Second Olympian and Silver Medalist died of natural causes at 1:05am on October 5, 2019 in Payson, Utah surrounded by loved ones. He was 80.

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(Salt Lake City) .07 of a second isn't much time, less than it takes to blink. But on a hot June afternoon at the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan, for Harold Blaine Lindgren, .07 was a lifetime.

Born June 26, 1939 in Salt Lake City, Blaine grew up in Chesterfield, Utah and began playing sports to honor his twin brother, Duane, who was killed when they were nine and their father who Blaine idolized.

With a passion for football, Blaine attended Cyprus High School where coach Rex McKee suggested the talented All-State player attempt track and field to build his speed. Since the school had no hurdlers, the 6'4" Blaine decided he would become "the best one they had." He not only achieved that goal, he became the best in the state, remaining undefeated his junior and senior years while also earning two state titles in the high hurdles and two in the low.

After graduating in 1957, Blaine enrolled at the University of Utah where he joined the Phi Delta Theta fraternity and played one season of football before joining the track team. After winning the Skyline Conference as a freshman, Blaine's coaches Marv Hess and Gordon Mortenson counseled him to forget football: track and field was his future. Lindgren went on to win every conference race he ever competed in except one and earned All-American honors. Twice.

Placing third in the 1961 NCAA high hurdles and second in the high hurdles in the National AAU meet, after graduating from college in 1962, Blaine moved to southern California to train with the famous Southern California Striders athletics club while simultaneously working full-time at Pasadena's U.S. Bank and Trust. He spent the next six summers competing for the United States internationally in the 110-meter high hurdles, including three appearances at the famous USA vs. USSR meets.

In 1963, Blaine traveled to S√£o Paulo, Brazil for the Pan Am Games where he won gold with a time of 13.8 seconds, a new record. Blaine next set his sights on the upcoming semi-final Olympic Trials in Randall's Island, New York, but in the era of amateur athletics he lacked the funds to get there. Fortunately, supporters pitched in to purchase the twenty-five-year-old athlete's airfare. Unfortunately, Blaine could not afford a hotel room and ended up sleeping in the lounge. Determined to win, Lindgren faced off against Willie Davenport and Hayes Jones, with whom he had spent months trading podium placements. In the end, as the crowd of 14,000 roared, Lindgren came in second with a time of 13.7, just behind Hayes' 13.4 and before Davenport's 13.9.

Two months later Blaine entered California's Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum to again face Hayes and Davenport who surprised his future teammates by coming in first with a time of 13.6, the same as Hayes, while Blaine clocked in at 13.8. With hearts racing, the trio was told they were bound for Tokyo where the heavily favorited Blaine took first in Round One (14.20) and the Semi-Finals (13.95).

On October 18, 1964, Blaine once again knelt in line with Hayes and Davenport, only this time the cinders covering his lane were wet from an earlier rain. Shrugging off the conditions, when the starter gun fired Blaine shot off the blocks and he and Hayes were neck and neck down the stretch as the crowd rose to their feet. Pulling ahead of Hayes, Blaine crossed the white marker line on the ground and leaned forward to break the 5'2"-high finish tape,Ä¶only he was five meters too early and ended up crossing under the tape which Hayes then broke with his chest.

"I went over to the teletype and it said I won," Blaine noted, remembering the announcement being made to that effect. But forty-five minutes later, when the athletes were called out to receive their medals, Hayes was declared the winner. Confused, Blaine was told that the official rules stated that whoever broke the tape was the winner. In the end, Lindgren would be awarded the Silver with a recorded time of 13.74, .07 behind Hayes Jones' 13.67.

It was .07 seconds that Blaine would spend a lifetime explaining.

"In those days, the International Olympic Committee didn't use the same finish technology we have today," he said. "It was a hard-to-calibrate photo system, so for the finals they painted five white lines at the finish line, one yard apart. I wasn't used to that, so when I crossed the first line I leaned. Unfortunately, I still had five yards to go! So, Hayes broke the tape and I got silver."

While he shed tears over the technicality, Blaine decided he would do better at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. When he returned home to Salt Lake City from Tokyo, silver medal in hand, Mayor J. Bracken Lee gave him a key to the city. Blaine moved to Nampa, Idaho where he went to the Chamber of Commerce to find a map of the city to plan running routes. While there, he met Maiva Uzzel.

"I soon found myself chasing him around a running track in a car," Maiva said with a laugh. Three months later they married, and their love blossomed over the next fifty-two years with five children and many grandchildren, all of whom loved "Grandpa Blaine."

\"Maiva also straightened me out about the Tokyo Games,\" he chuckled. \"She pointed out that there are the same number of silver medals as there are gold. And how many people can say they have an Olympic silver medal? That was the end of that."

After retiring sport, Blaine entered the banking industry where he worked for First Security Bank and later Zions Bank from which he retired in 2006. Never one to sit on his laurels, while residing in Salem, Utah Blaine remained a member or board member of local and national sports committees and organizations throughout his life, including the Utah Sports Hall of Fame Foundation. With a passion for sport, Blaine also refereed high school and college football for over 35 years and influenced tens of thousands of young athletes during his career.

"Blaine's work and contributions to The Utah Sports Hall of Fame Foundation, and Utah's sport community, is unmeasurable," said Norma Carr, president of USHOF.

Indeed, Blaine received numerous accolades during his life and was inducted into several Halls of Fame including those at Cyprus High School, West Valley City (1990), Utah Summer Games (1991), U of U Crimson Club (1986), Utah Sports Hall of Fame (1972) and the National High School Hall of Fame (2006). In December of 1999, Sports Illustrated listed him as being #10 in The 50 Greatest Sports Figures From Utah.

But for his family and friends, it was Blaine's larger-than-life personality that left the greatest legacy.

"An Olympic silver medal was placed around his neck in Tokyo, but everyone who knew Dad knew a heart of gold was beating right behind it," said his daughter Maquel Lindgren-Houlihan.

Blaine is survived by his wife Maiva, Five children: Daris (Kim), Lex (Marrena), Maquel (Mike) Houlihan, Kaice (Eric) Jeffs, Kimberly Dobson, Eight grandchildren, Seven step-grandchildren and Two step-great grandchildren.

A celebration of Blaine's life will be held on Saturday, October 12, 2019 at 1:00pm at Larkin Mortuary, 260 East South Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84111, where friends and family may visit one hour prior to the service.