

Top U.S. Olympic weightlifter



Bruce Wilhelm . . . 13 years ago.

Wilhelm finally makes it — eight years late

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By DICK O'CONNOR

A long time ago—1963 to be exact—Bruce Wilhelm was the best high school athlete in the Mid-peninsula area. He won the state track and field championship in the shot put and was also an outstanding wrestler.

Fremont High School coaches couldn't decide if Wilhelm would make it to the 1968 Olympics in track or wrestling.

Wilhelm didn't make it in either event. In fact, he missed the 1968 Olympics at Mexico City and didn't make it to Munich four years later for the Olympics.

Later this month Wilhelm will be competing for the United States in the Olympics in Montreal, Canada.

As a shot putter? No.

As a wrestler?

Wrong again.

He will be a member of the U.S. weight-lifting team at Montreal.

Wilhelm, who now lives in Phoenix, Arizona, went to Stanford after his graduation from Fremont. He attended two years before transferring to Oklahoma State University.

"I left Stanford because they would not let me compete in both

track and wrestling," Wilhelm said of the switch.

He went to Oklahoma State on a wrestling scholarship and did very well until injuries halted his career.

After graduation, Wilhelm returned to the West Coast and spent two years getting a masters degree at San Jose State. He also returned to track and was one of the top shot putters in the country in 1972 when he was an alternate on the U.S. Olympic team after a best throw of 68-9½.

Wilhelm gave up track the following year because he found it was too expensive to travel around the country competing in meets as an amateur.

He switched to weight-lifting, a sport in which an athlete usually does his best when he is past the age of 35.

Wilhelm, who is 6-4 and weighs 330 pounds, won the United States super-heavyweight title (for lifters who weigh more than 242 pounds) in the national championship meet at York, Pa.

He also won the super-heavy-weight division in the Pan American Games last two years ago and

finished fifth in a world meet in Russia.

"I've taken a year off from work to make the U.S. Olympic team," he said. "It would be nice if the United States would subsidize its athletes like most of the other nations in the world do."

Wilhelm is a teacher at Carl Hayden High School in Phoenix.

"I'm excited about competing in Montreal," Wilhelm said. "But I think that will be the end of weight-lifting for me."

"I couldn't go through this again four years from now," the 30-year-old Wilhelm said.

Other members of the United States team are light heavyweight Sam Bigler of Lancaster, Pa.; heavyweight Mark Cameron of Middleton, R.I.; lightweight Dan Cantore of Pacifica, Cal.; middle heavyweight Lee James of Manchester, Pa.; middleweight Fred Lowe of East Lansing, Mich.; heavyweight Gary Drinnen of Belleville, N.Y.; middle heavyweight Phil Grippaldi of Harrison, Tenn.; and super heavyweight Sam Walker of Dallas, Tex.