

ON THE 25 MARCH 1980 DURING SAN DIEGO STATE  
UNIV VS AIR FORCE ACADEMY DUAL MEET CLIFF  
SCHNEDAR RAN POLE VAULT EVENT BECAUSE NO  
PV OFFICIALS WERE AVAILABLE. THAT WAS THE KIND  
OF GUY CLIFF WAS - AND HE WILL BE MISSED.  
Bob

TV-RADIO  
FINANCIAL NEWS

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Pole vaulter Cliff Schnedar was looking forward to the Olympic Trials when he began a workout Monday that was to end in tragedy.

# Freak Vault Mishap Fatal To Schnedar

## World-Ranked Competitor Remembered As An Enthusiastic, Selfless Individual

By STEVE BRAND  
Staff Writer, The San Diego Union

He sat in the grass and smiled.

It was spring 1977, and Point Loma College's Cliff Schnedar was looking forward to the track season. He had reason to smile.

At the NAIA Indoor Championships that year, he soared 16-6, a lifetime best. As he lolled in the grass on the infield of the college track, he told of his dreams and why he picked an event like the pole vault.

It didn't seem all that dramatic, a small-college vaulter who was enjoying great success. But his coach, Jim Crakes, said this was a special person, one worth keeping an eye on.

"Cliff has the ability to be one of the best in the world," said Crakes. "You'll see."

He proved a prophet when last year Schnedar soared 17-7, cracking the top 50 in the world and ranking 14th in the United States.

He was on the verge of breaking the 18-foot barrier. Until Monday afternoon, one day after qualifying for the Olympic Trials with a 17-3 vault.

Practicing with decathlete Craig Brigham, the acrobatic Schnedar, a graduate of San Dieguito High, MiraCosta College

**'Cliff was always there when you needed him.'**

**— San Diego State track Coach Dick Hill**

and Point Loma, worked on his form at San Diego State without a crossbar.

In a freak accident, the 25-year-old Schnedar went off the end of the foam rubber pit, landing on the back of his head, hitting a concrete slab.

Brigham immediately summoned campus security and Aztec track Coach Dick Hill. Schnedar was unconscious when he was admitted to Alvarado Hospital.

He never regained consciousness. He died yesterday at 2 p.m.

His is believed to be the first death directly related to pole vaulting.

"What a loss," said Hill. "Cliff was the kind of person who always was there when you needed him. If someone needed a hand at moving the pits or helping somewhere else, he'd do it, and cheerfully.

"He was on his way. He'd qualified for the Olympic Trials. He'd come so far."

Indeed.

On that spring day in 1977 he spoke of clearing 17 feet. But he didn't consider 17 a barrier, just another step toward something higher. He took a very lighthearted approach to vaulting, obviously preferring to thoroughly enjoy whatever hard work would produce.

To Cliff Schnedar, pole vaulting was something more than an athletic event. It was almost mystical.

"I think it's part of a desire to fly," he said with a straight face. "When you're up there, there is freedom. You feel no attachments."

Freedom. Schnedar reveled in it. He also enjoyed the camaraderie of the vaulting fraternity, a group many feel is one step from the nut house.

"Vaulters are unique," he agreed. "You have to be pretty secure of yourself to jump on a 16-foot pole and soar 18 feet into the air, trying to go over a little bar. But the best thing about the vault is its fun. It really is."

It was a trait Coach Crakes remembers as being an intricate part of Schnedar, who holds the school record at 16-8.

Schnedar's father, John, said his son willed his vital organs to medical science. The body will be cremated, with memorial services to be held at All Hallows Catholic Church in La Jolla Monday at 11 a.m. Friends will gather at the family's home following the services.

A memorial athletic fund will be set up in Cliff's name at Point Loma College.

Schnedar is survived by his father, his mother, Rita, a brother and four sisters.