



HAL DAVIS

... As 1939 Star

8/11/74

er of note is also being inducted. It will be more than passing interest to many people in this area to know that Harold (Hal) Davis of Morgan Hill will be honored on the same level with the great Owens.

A graduate of Live Oak high school, Davis went on to Salinas Junior College and subsequently to the University of California where he became a world record holder in the 100-yard dash, the 100 meters, and the 200 meters and the 220-dash. A few moons have gone over the

horizon since those days in the late 1930s and the early 1940s, and not too many people can say they saw Davis run even though he performed right here in San Jose as a prep athlete and later as a collegian.

Bud Knew Him Well

THERE'S ONE MAN among us who knew Davis well. He is Bud Winter, retired San Jose State University track and field coach, the man who discovered him.

"Hal Davis was the answer to a coach's dream," recalls Winter. "From the day that I first recruited him at the top of a ladder in a fruit orchard to the present time Hal Davis has always been a super guy."

Winter, fresh out of the University of California, was the track coach, journalism teacher and editor of the school's paper, at Salinas Junior College in the late 1930s. Davis won some acclaim in high school competition, but he was considered something of an uncut diamond until Winter got him under his wing.

"A lot of schools would have liked to have him, but I talked to the young man like a Dutch Uncle and lured him out of that peach tree," recalls Winter. He and Davis had two years together at Salinas before Hal transferred to California to become an international

star. "He was the most coachable young man any coach would want to have under his guidance," said Winter. Bud has been selected to be Davis' presenter at the Hall of Fame induction and he'll be there in Charleston to do the honors.

"Davis will finally get the recognition he so justly deserves," says Winter. "He ran so fast that the timers often would not believe their watches and arbitrarily changed them because they wouldn't believe the second hands."

Unbelievable Run

Winter recalls the West Coast Relays in Fresno. The year was 1939. Only one man was persuaded to test Davis in the 200 meters. He was clocked in the world record time of 20.2, but the officials took it away from him because they said he had to have two men running against him.

Bud did a lot of complaining about the decision, but he could not persuade the officials. "That same year he ran 10.3 in a 100 meters trials, but he was even faster in the finals according to my watch. The officials wouldn't believe what they saw," he said. "He never got credit for all the records he broke."

Davis, now employed in Morgan Hill by Steak-Mate mushroom growers, is not complaining. "It was a great experience and I enjoyed every minute of my running career," he said.

One of Davis' great experiences was visiting New York in January, 1941 to participate in an indoor meet in Madison Square Garden. Hal, a slow starter, nipped the field of sprinters in the 60-yard dash. "Davis had the longest stride of any sprinter in the world," recalls Winter. "He covered 9 feet, 6 inches with each stride and when he got to rolling he could catch anybody."

Winter relates that Davis' preparation for the meet was rather unique. He had to work out in a packing shed that measured 45 yards. "It rained for 28 straight days in Salinas that year," he said. "There was nothing else to do but go into the shed. All he could practice was his starts, but he made the training pay off for him with victories in the Garden and later in the Boston Gardens.

The New York meet was Hal's debut indoors. Winter relates that he disrupted the whole meet by insisting that the promoter provide starting blocks for Davis. "None were available and they had to go out and hire a union carpenter to come in and build the blocks," Winter tells us. "The blocks made history in indoor competition. Everybody's used them since."