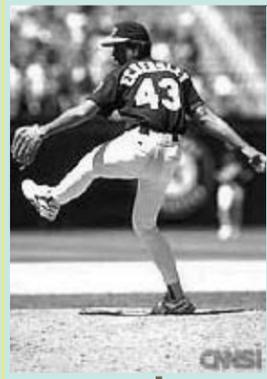


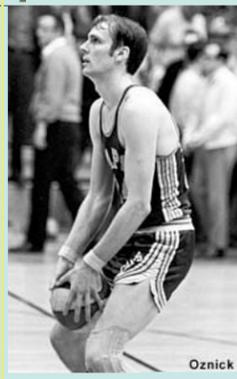
Ty Cobb - Slap Style



Sadaharu Oh - Flamingo Style



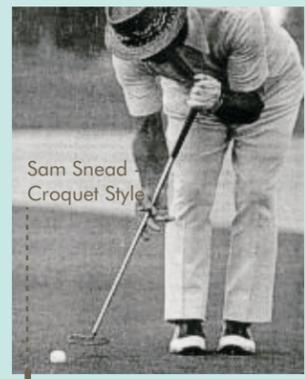
'Disco' Dennis Eckersley - Submarine Style



Rick Barry - Granny Style



Kareem 'The Dream' Abdul Jabbar - Skyhook Style



Sam Snead - Croquet Style

Radically new forms in sports, especially those initiated by athletes trying to find a competitive edge, occasionally lead to dominant individuals, yet very few of these techniques actually take hold with the community at large or remain in use for long periods of time. Where are the imitators, the copiers who take these newfound techniques, make them their own and improve upon them? Why have these forms not succeeded? Why has a qualitative, stylistic change not been adopted even with proven quantitative success? Extremely successful athletes – 'Hall-of-Famers' – in numerous sports have utilized now mostly defunct techniques hardly emulated even in their time: Ty Cobb, Sadaharu Oh, and Dennis Eckersley in baseball; Rick Barry and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in basketball; and Sam Snead in golf.¹ Two revolutionary transformations in athletics, the one handed shot in basketball popularized by Hank Luisetti, and the Fosbury Flop in high jump, invented by Dick Fosbury are rare exceptions. 'The Flop' and 'the Shot' were radical in form and not just strategy (i.e. the forward pass in football or the drop-shot in tennis) and entirely transformed their sports, transcending their individual inventors. Focusing intently on the Fosbury Flop, I would argue that the Flop was born and successfully integrated itself into mainstream sports due to the social climate within which it occurred as well as its explosive entrance onto the sporting scene.²

ATHLETIC INNOVATION

1) This particular list of athletes, save that of Dennis Eckersley, is owed, in part, to Bruce Anderson's article Out of Play from "Attaché US Airways' Online Magazine. <http://www.attachemag.com/>
 2) Since my interest is to prove why the Flop has been successful rather than why the others have not, let me generally say that each particular athlete has not been extensively emulated because the introduction of their particular method did not arrive with any sort of abruptness or during a time of social upheaval (those reasons I will employ for the Flop).



Dick Fosbury - 'Free' Style



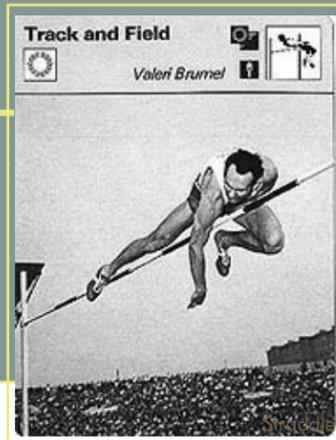
Feet First
Natural Calisthenic



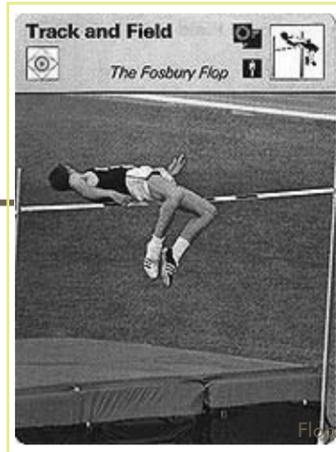
Scissors
Physical Somatic



Roll
Technical Kinesthetic



Tactical Strategic

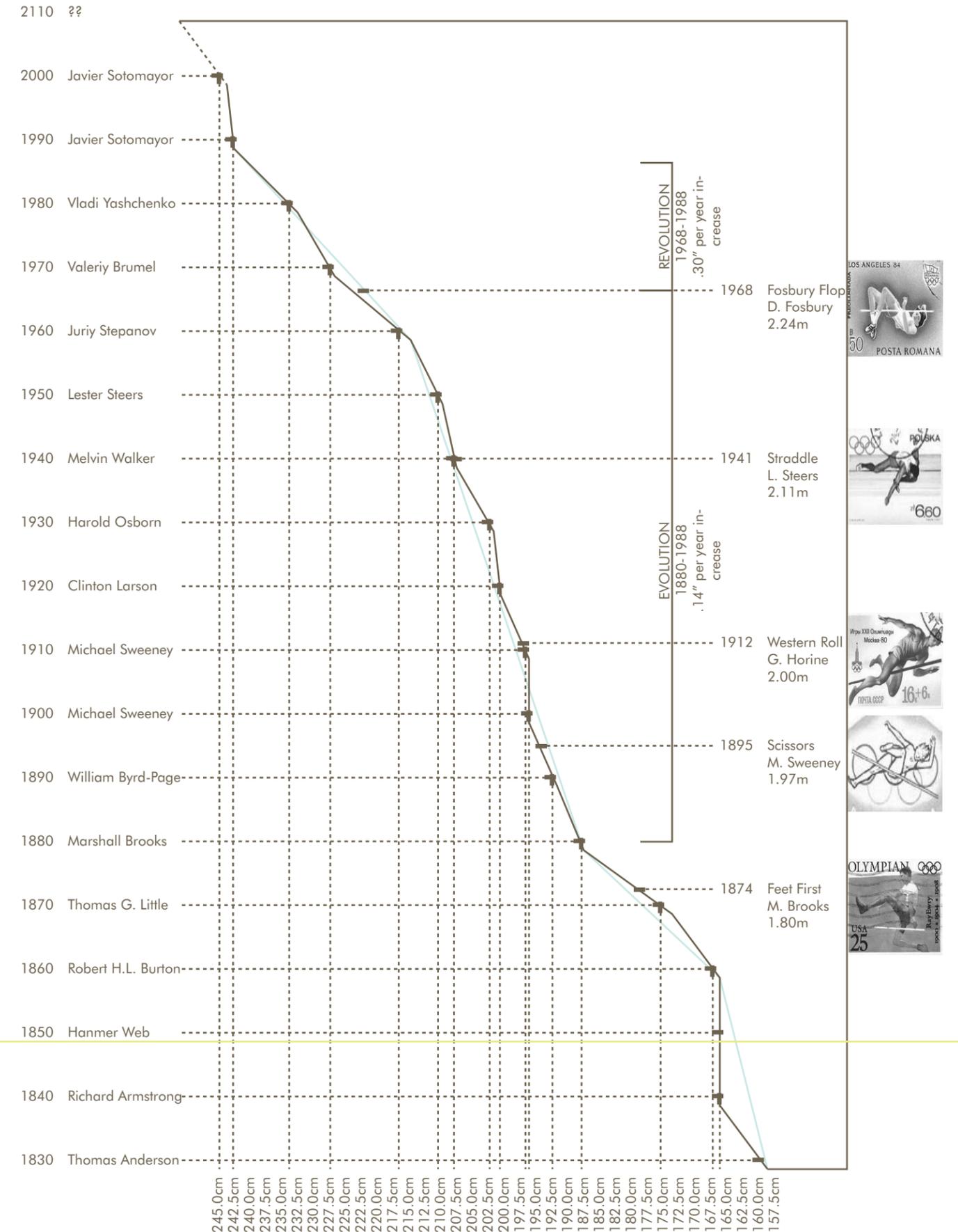


Mental Euphoric

As is common for residents of Oregon, Dick Fosbury found himself a track and field athlete by grade school.³ A high jumper, he was taught the complicated 'straddle' technique where strong legs and jumping ability is a definite requirement. Forefronted by Valeri Brumel,⁴ an exceptional leaper, the straddle requires the jumper to directly approach the bar and forcefully rocket one leg skyward, raising the upright body over the bar at the apogee of the jump trajectory. Tall and thin and unable to master the complicated straddle compounded by a lack of natural leg strength, Fosbury pursued a more intuitive form of jumping following a modified 'scissors' style like one would use to jump over a low fence.⁵ As the heights that Fosbury was to clear became higher and higher, the more prone (closer to 90 degrees to the bar) he became, leaning back so his body cleared the bar as his legs kicked over. To arrive parallel to the bar so that the most of his body could pass over at once, Fosbury developed a running diagonal approach. The diagonal trajectory of his body supplying greater centrifugal force coupled with his supine position to the ground, lowering his center of gravity sometimes below the bar, effectively required less Work. (Moving along a diagonal vector, up stairs for example, requires much less Work over time than a perpendicular approach. And since time is not a factor in the high jump and the landing point can be predicted based on the launching point, less Work is all that matters.) With further explorations (the Flop is an evolution rather than a discovery) into lift and rotation and changes in collegiate and Olympic regulations,⁶ Fosbury's style became profoundly headfirst and backward. This new technique allowed him to improve his personal best by 15" to 6'-7" in 1965. The Flop was dawning.

TECHNICAL HISTORY

- 3) Oregon is home to many successful track and field athletes including Steve Prefontaine and Phil Knight.
- 4) Valeri Brumel, Russian high jumper, held the world record Fosbury failed to beat in 1968. Set in 1963 at 7'-5¾" Brumel's potential was cut short by a motorcycle accident.
- 5) Blount, Roy Jr. "Being Backward Gets Results." Sports Illustrated, Feb. 10, 1969
- 6) Prior to 1935, Olympic regulations prohibited high jumpers from leading with their head. The 1968 Summer Olympics would mark the first time foam-filled mats were used in the landing pits.



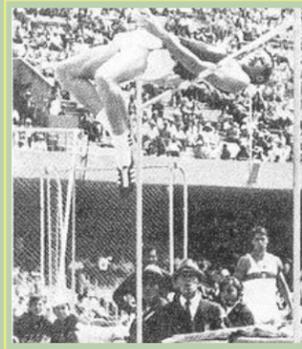


Fosbury Pre 1968



Fosbury Post 1968

"My mind knew that I wanted to achieve the purpose and my body responded."
D.F. -THE HINDU



Fosbury, next at Oregon State, spent more time struggling with the straddle at the request of his coaches, yet continued a personal pursuit of the Flop. The OSU coaching staff pushed the traditional style on Fosbury, until one day he cleared 6'-6" by nearly six inches with the Flop. Fosbury forsook the straddle for good, did 6'10" in his sophomore year and then, last season (1968), as a junior, became the most consistent seven-footer in the nation.⁵ He made the 1968 Olympic team with a personal best of 7'-3" and shocked the world with his 7'-4 1/4" jump (in his third attempt) at the Olympics which amounted to a gold medal and Olympic record. Fosbury floundered just as fast as he peaked, (although he won the NCAA title in 1969, he never again reached his Olympic height, and failed to make the Olympic team in 1972) but the Flop has lived on.

Fosbury's pursuit of the Flop was personal. Irwin Ungers in his book *Turning Point* would say that his pursuit was political.⁷ Over the course of five years, as he perfected the Flop, Fosbury exercised creative freedom⁸ ('freedom' being the most important concept of the late 1960s, née since the Enlightenment) in finding the most comfortable fit for his body as well as his mind, coming to fruition in 1968. Fosbury, having traded his civil engineering studies for Eastern religion and the teachings of Confucius and Lao-tzu, said in his 1969 interview with *Sports Illustrated*, "I didn't change my style. It changed inside me." This was a common theme during the late 1960s, especially the explosive year of 1968). Fosbury sought an internal resolution to an external problem to which many in the late 1960s turned to drugs (Fosbury turned to athletics). In accordance with Fosbury's physical feat, he used the technique of 'physching' himself up, relatively new at the time. Positive thinking stirred his adrenaline glands and helped him achieve his goal.

WHY THE FLOP?

7) See chapter 6 'The Personal Is Political'

8) This statement is entirely owed to George Grant in his work 'A Platitude' of 1969.

TIMELINE 1968

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| January | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Boston Five' Indicted on Conspiracy Youth International Party Founded N. Korea Captures USS Pueblo N. Vietnamese Launch Tet Offensive R. M. Nixon Declares Candidacy |
| February | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haleyville, AL, First 9-1-1 Service S. Vietnam Recaptures Hue |
| March | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> McCarthy Gainers 40% in NH Primary My Lai Massacre Novotny Resigns - Prague Spring LBJ Will Not Seek Reelection |
| April | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MLK Jr. Assassinated - Riots Erupt 24k Reserves Called to 2yr Duty Student Occupation - Columbia U |
| May | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Revolts Begin in Paris 'Bloody Monday' in Paris Revolts US & N. Vietnamese Begin Peace Talks 9 Million Workers on Strike in Paris |
| June | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robert F. Kennedy Assassinated 50k March in Poor People's Campaign Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Signed |
| July | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R. M. Nixon Nominated for President Soviet Union Invades Czechoslovakia Violence at Chicago Nat'l Convention |
| August | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's Lib Targets Miss America Violent Student Protests in Mexico City |
| September | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apollo 7 is Launched R.D. Fosbury Wins Gold XIX Olympiad LBJ Halts All Bombing in N. Vietnam Nixon Elected by Smallest Margin |
| October | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nat'l Turn in Your Draft Card Day Apollo 8 is Launched |
| November | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apollo 8 is Launched |
| December | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apollo 8 is Launched |