



AL HAMNIK: The region loses another athlete to the heavenly hall of fame



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Tim Keough, a jolly old soul while retired and living in Arizona, told friends in Northwest Indiana that he often was "booked" making appearances as Santa Claus at the local stores during Christmas.

Keough fit the role perfectly with his bushy white beard and wide girth. He loved children, the feeling was mutual, and he put everyone in a holiday spirit regardless of the season.

Two minutes on the phone with this guy and you were smiling.

You'd never guess Keough had joined Rudy Chapa and Carey Pinkowski at Hammond High as the nation's top three prep two-milers in 1975.

Chapa ran 8:51, Keough 8:52.8 and Pinkowski 8:56.2.

Former coach Dan Candiano still has a black and white photo of the famed trio, who moved like cheetahs and resembled the Bee Gees with their shoulder-length hair and boyish good looks.

"He tried wrestling first and was only with me for two years," Candiano said of Keough. "He had Osgood Schlatter Disease (of the knees) and after only one year of serious training, became the second fastest two-miler in the country."

Keough died last Friday of a massive heart attack. He leaves behind an ex-wife, Lorri, and three sons.

"Tim loved life and lived it with a fervor so many of us dream about," Chapa said.

News of his death caused shock waves, particularly on Facebook, where Keough had a strong following in the region.

"An unbelievable sense of humor. An upbeat guy with an infectious laugh. That's what stands out for me," Pinkowski said. "Tim was loved by all. I'm really heart-broken by his passing.

"As for his athletic success, you can frame that as well. We three did something 38 years ago and nobody's done it since or before."

Keough ran for Arizona State, Chapa at Oregon and Pinkowski — longtime director of the

Bank of America Chicago Marathon — at Villanova.

Pinkowski actually got Keough to enter the 1997 Chicago Marathon, where his 3:42 was good for 3,997th place out of 14,400 finishers.

"I still look upon them as sons and sons shouldn't pass before the father," Candiano said quietly.

"From a running prospective, Tim was an anomaly," Chapa added. "He was big and somewhat heavy and didn't have the work ethic of Carey and I, but he was so tough.

"In the big races, he was there."

Lorri said it best when she wrote the following on Tim's Facebook page:

"Thank you everyone for your prayers and support ... I hope knowing Tim passed peacefully surrounded by his three sons and is at rest comforts all those that are grieving ... as I said my goodbye I told him the finish line is in sight ... Another champion entered the hall of fame in heaven ... There will be a memorial in Arizona and a funeral in Indiana ... Please continue to pray for my sons and for me to have the wisdom in the days to come to know how to help them especially little David who does not fully understand what this means ... Tim had soooo many friends and my desire is to keep the spirit of Tim alive and the legacy he leaves behind ... I will continue to post on his FB page in the days to come so you all know how we are doing ... Even though Tim and I divorced ... We had a deep friendship ... A mutual love for our sons and I will miss and mourn for him ... I can't think of anyone I'd want to be the father of my kids than Tim ... Rest in peace Tim ... We already miss you.

"PS: David says hi."

This column solely represents the writer's opinion. Reach him at al.hamnik@nwi.com