

1945 May 21-27

Running into the Navy

Track Wizard Enters Navy

Captain Chris Mesoloras, whose fleeting feet paced the Central track team, is the only Red Raider eligible for the State meet at Madison on Saturday by virtue of his second in the 200 and third in the 100 yard dashes.

However, the La Crosse swift will be unable to compete. Mesoloras will leave for the United States Navy Friday.



MESOLORAS

He leaves behind him a brilliant high school career in the field of track. Just one week ago in the Wisconsin Rapids quadrangler affair the Central captain broke a school record running the 200 in 21.3.

Although he was a wizard on the track he was also active in other school activities. He was elected president of the Student-Teachers council at Central. Mesoloras also played in the band and orchestra.

However, when the fleeting figure of Mesoloras is again brought to the minds of Central sports fans they will remember him as the star cinderman of the Raider track team, who, with Art Fregin, carried the 1945 track burden.

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 May 22, page 7)

When COVID-19 caused the closure of schools this spring, high school athletes were robbed of their spring sports seasons. In 1945, many high school seniors had their school and sports activities disrupted

by a world war. Chris Mesoloras, a standout track athlete at La Crosse Central High School, was just one of them.

Born on May 1, 1927, to Nick and Mary (Kish) Mesoloras in La Crosse,¹ Chris was of Greek heritage. When he was in high school, a group of families contracted with a teacher through the Greek Teachers' Association in Chicago to come to La Crosse to teach their children the Greek language. Peter Kodias, principal of Greek-American schools in Chicago, taught the classes in the La Crosse Teachers College training school. Besides Chris Mesoloras, the other students were Irene and Tommy Kapellas, Ethel and James Nicklas, William and Paul Pappas, Paul Chrisam, Diana Theos, and George Stathis.²

Besides being a track star, Chris Mesoloras was the president of his class at Central High School.³

As the article above states, Mesoloras qualified for the state track meet in Madison his senior year. But he did not get a chance to try for a gold medal because he had enlisted in the Navy and had to leave for basic training on May 25th, just one day before the state track meet.

During his Navy service, he was trained as a medical corpsman in San Diego, California.⁴

Following his discharge from the service, Mesoloras earned a business degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1952. Later that same year, he married Gwen Booth.⁵

They established Gwen's Fashions in Onalaska and ran it for 32 years until retiring. Then Christ Mesoloras embarked on a second career in real estate with Gerrard Hoeschler. He retired from that in 2006. Outside of work, he obtained a private pilot's license at the age of 40 and was the treasurer of the UW-La Crosse Quarterback Club for 32 years.⁶

Christ Mesoloras died on September 11, 2014. He was survived by his wife and three daughters.⁷



Christ Mesoloras

(La Crosse Tribune, 2014 September 17)

This coming weekend would have been the state track meet at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Because of the worldwide pandemic in 2020, the best high school male and female track athletes will not have chance to compete in the pinnacle event of their high school track and field careers.

It may not give today's athletes any solace, but seventy-five years ago high school students like Christ Mesoloras missed out on a lot of things too because of a worldwide threat.

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Sources & Notes:

¹ "Christ Mesoloras," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2014 September 17, https://lacrossetribune.com/lifestyles/announcements/obituaries/christ-mesoloras/article_a7c36e94-65a3-5623-acdc-f1128cdbbcce.html.

² "Greek Children Here Attend Class To Learn Language Of Forefathers," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1943 July 11, page 3.

³ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2014 September 17.

⁴ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2014 September 17.

⁵ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2014 September 17.

⁶ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2014 September 17.

⁷ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2014 September 17.