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Empire Games' Herb Mols dies on eve of close

By Brett Avery

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AMHERST — At about 11 each evening, Herb Mols walked into the Empire State Games media center to leaf through a two-inch stack of the day's results.

Fatigued from his duties as Western Region director, Mols considered skipping his visit Saturday. But at the last minute

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he had a friend drive him to the Center for Tomorrow on the University of Buffalo campus.

Within 10 minutes of his arrival, Mols collapsed from cardiac arrest. A games volunteer began cardio-pulmonary resuscitation almost immediately, and paramedics arrived minutes later. But Mols never regained consciousness, and was

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Herb Mols dies; was founder, area chief of Empire State Games

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pronounced dead at 12:05 a.m. yesterday at Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital.

Mols, 71, was a lifelong advocate of amateur athletics. A founder of the games, the nation's largest sports competition this side of the Los Angeles Olympics, he served as Western director since their inception in 1977.

"He was dedicated to watching the younger athletes compete, because he was interested in the Olympic movement," said Marty Dem-brow, the Western equipment manager, who met Mols in the 1950s. "He had every (games) statistic that ever was, and he wanted to show the public the athletes who fared well."

Although medal counts were not kept by games directors, Mols knew Western had the largest totals six of the first eight years. Saturday it clinched No. 7, breaking its own record of 365 and finishing the day with more than 400.

Announcements of Mols' death were made

at the game sites yesterday, followed by a moment of silence. Games directors had selected him to extinguish the flame at the closing ceremonies this year, since the Games return to Syracuse next July 29-Aug. 2 after two years in Buffalo. Instead, two of his daughters, Susan and Sandy, performed the task.

Mols was born in Buffalo in 1915, and graduated from Cornell University in 1936.

A Navy radar specialist in the Pacific during World War II, he joined the staff of the Park School, a small independent in suburban Buffalo, after the war.

There he taught biology, chemistry and physics, and was athletic director. He coached football, basketball, track and baseball before retiring in 1973.

A former president of the Niagara Amateur Athletic Union, he also held a national AAU post. He retired from the AAU's successor, The Athletic Congress, in 1981 to concentrate on the Games.

During his AAU tenure, Mols served as

manager of the 1972 U.S. Olympic men's basketball team, involved in the controversial gold-medal game against the Soviets in Munich.

The overtime game ended in confusion after officials twice called for replaying the last three seconds. The Soviets scored to win the game, 51-50.

Mols was selected to draft the U.S. protest, later denied by International Olympic Committee officials.

His wife, Ruth, died in 1981. One of their six children, Brenda Fraser, was president of the Rochester School Board in 1976 and managing director of the Rochester Community Players. She died in February 1980.

Mols is also survived by children, Mary, Gary and David; two brothers, Robert and Charles; a sister, Charlotte Van Nymegan; and 17 grandchildren.

Funeral services will be 10 a.m. Wednesday in Christ the King Church on Main Street in Amherst. Burial will be in Aurora.