

Track and Field



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Leader of the New Wave

After Derek Ibbotson broke the world record for the mile in 1957, British miling went through a period of relative stagnation. It was not until 1964 that a new wave of runners appeared, capable of competing in world class fields. Alan Simpson, like Ibbotson a Yorkshireman, was probably the best of the bunch.

Although he won the AAA title in 1963, Simpson was still an uncertain quantity as an international and inexplicably dropped out of one match when apparently running well. However he firmly laid to rest any doubts about his calibre when he finished a fine fourth in the Olympic 1,500 metres in Tokyo, only a yard behind the silver medallist, Josef Odlozil of Czechoslovakia. Earlier that summer Simpson had captured the UK 1,500-metres record, reducing John Boulter's mark to 3 min 39.1 sec, and this was to remain unbeaten for five years. In 1965 he at last shattered Ibbotson's British mile record of 3 min 57.2 sec which had stood ever since 1957. On June 7 he clocked 3 min 56.6 sec, but this was only the beginning. A month later he was again under Ibbotson's time at Dublin with 3 min 56.9 sec, but this was still short of his latent best. A final instalment came on August 30 at London's White

City when he put further fractions of a second between himself and Ibbotson's old mark with 3 min 55.7 sec. That summer he also added his name to the role of winners of the classic Emsley Carr mile and took the AAA title for the third successive year.

Still lacking a big Games souvenir, Simpson travelled to Kingston, Jamaica in 1966 and did all that could have been expected of him by finishing a great runner-up to Kenya's Kip Keino in the Commonwealth Games mile. He was fourth in the European 1,500 metres a few weeks later.

In 1967 he rounded off his career still at the top of the British rankings at both the mile and 1,500 metres, bringing his total of sub-four-minute miles to eleven. As an event leader for some five years, Simpson occupies an honourable place in the high tradition of Yorkshire and England miling.

ALAN SIMPSON

Born May 22, 1940, in Rotherham, Yorkshire

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1966 CG: silver medal in the mile in 3 min 57.1 sec, Kingston

Alan Simpson winning the 1965 Emsley Carr Mile from Jo Odlozil of Czechoslovakia