

# Track and Field



*Ann Packer*



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## Ann Packer

### *The Right Result, the Wrong Event*

Some very fine athletes have spent a large part of their active career discovering the event to which their talents were best suited. In the case of Ann Packer, her career ended with that discovery. Fortunately, it was not too late for her to benefit from the knowledge.

Her story began in 1960, or that was when she made her first mark, not as a runner, indeed, but as a long jumper. Winning the WAAA long jump title that year, she earned her first international selection. The jumping career never really took off, however, and in 1962 she settled for hurdling and sprinting, reaching the final of the 80-metres hurdles and winning a silver medal in the England relay quartet at the Perth Commonwealth Games.

It was not until 1963, the year before her retirement, that Ann took up the 400 metres. This seemed to suit her rhythm admirably, for running for England against the USSR, she unexpectedly defeated the muscular Maria Itkina, twice winner of the European title. At the close of that season, Ann was quoted somewhat modestly as saying that her ambition was "to get to Tokyo and do well there."

During 1964, Ann ran the 800 metres a few times as part of her 400-metres build-up and ran it well enough to qualify for the Olympic team. In the 400 metres at Tokyo, she improved the United Kingdom record in each round and defeated Australia's Betty Cuthbert in the semi-final. But in the final she lost by 2 tenths of a second to the Australian star. Now her only chance for a gold medal remained in the 800 metres. She advanced uneasily from her heat in 2:12.6, running a more reassuring but still unimpressive 2:06.0 in the semi-final. In the final, she was utterly transformed, sweeping past the leaders at the final turn to win by five metres and shatter the world record. It turned out to be the right event after all.

#### ANN PACKER

Born March 8, 1942, in Reading, England

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

1962 ECH: bronze medal 4 x 100 m relay, 44.9 (Belgrade)  
1962 CG: silver medal 4 x 110 y relay 46.6 (Perth)  
1964 OG: silver medal 400 m, 52.2 (Tokyo)  
1964 OG: gold medal 800 m, 2:01.1 (Tokyo)  
World record: 800 m 2:01.1 (Tokyo, 1964)

*Ann Packer in 1964 when she broke the 800 m world record*