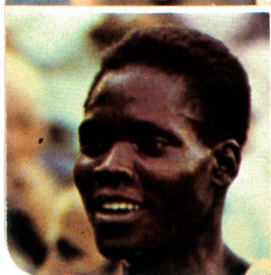


# Track and Field



*Ben Jipcho*



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## Ben Jipcho

### *Overshadowed by Keino up to 1973*

If Keino had never existed and if he had known how to marshal his talent, Benjamin Webura Jipcho, or "Ben", would undoubtedly have been an exceptional champion. Instead of which he had to wait until he was 30 before the true calibre of this extremely likeable and remarkably intelligent athlete was finally appreciated. In 1968, he was 25 when, in the final of the 1,500 m in the Mexico Olympics, he put himself at the service of Kipchoge Keino so that the latter could beat the American Jim Ryun. Having set a spanking pace for nearly 800 m in spite of the altitude, he finished tenth in 3 min 51.2 sec. But Keino became Olympic champion. In 1972, his task was to cause the failure of the Finns and of the Pole Malinovski in the 3,000 m steeplechase. Jipcho set the pace so well that Keino was again Olympic champion. He himself came only second, and the restricting presence of his famous elder began to irritate him. He was to overcome this in 1973.

Was Jipcho always to remain a brilliant second? No, as we shall see. In one season he became African champion in the 3,000 m steeplechase and in the

5,000 m, beat twice out of three times the Tanzanian Filbert Bayi, who had just dethroned Keino over 1,500 m, and improved upon or equalled three times the world 3,000 m steeplechase record. In the Commonwealth Games which took place in Christchurch in New Zealand at the very beginning of the year 1974, came the crowning glory: he won the 3,000 m steeplechase easily, and also won the 5,000 m, finishing only 1.4 sec outside the world record of the Belgian Emil Puttemans, and finished third in a fantastic 1,500 m in 3 min 13.2 sec. Great predictions were being made for the Montreal Olympics, but he turned professional.

#### **BEN JIPCHO**

Born March 1, 1943, in Kenya

#### **AWARDS AND RECORDS**

1972 OG: silver medal in the 3,000 m steeplechase in 8:24.6 sec

African games 1973 (Lagos):

gold medal in the 3,000 m steeplechase in 8:20.8

gold medal in the 5,000 m in 14:07.16

Commonwealth Games 1974 (Christchurch):

gold medal in the 5,000 m in 13:14.4

gold medal in the 3,000 m steeplechase in 8:20.8

World records in the 3,000 m steeplechase:

8:20.8 on June 15, 1973, in Lagos

8:19.8 on June 19, 1973, in Helsinki

8:14.0 on June 27, 1973, in Helsinki

*Ben Jipcho (101): professionalism rather than the Olympic Games*